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THE

MODERN

BRITISH DRAMA.

VOLUME SECOND.

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THE

Modern
BRITISH DRAMA.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOLUME SECOND.

TRAGEDIES.

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CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME SECOND.

TRAGEDIES.

		Year.	Page.
The Revenge,	YOUNG,	1721	1
The Brothers,	DITTO,	1752	24
Mariamne,	FENTON,	1723	48
George Barnwell,	LILLO,	1730	71
Fatal Curiosity,	DITTO,	1737	92
Arden of Feversham,	DITTO,	1739	105
Zara,	HILL,	1735	124
King Charles I.,	HAVARD,	1737	143
Gustavus Vasa,	BROOKE,	1738	161
Mahomet,	MILLER,	1744	187
Tancred and Sigismunda,	THOMSON,	1745	207
Irene,	JOHNSON,	1749	232
The Roman Father,	WHITEHEAD,	1750	254
Elfrida,	MASON,	1752	272
Caractacus,	DITTO,	1759	287
The Gamester,	MOORE,	1753	307
Boadicea,	GLOVER,	1753	331
The Earl of Essex,	JONES,	1753	349
Barbarossa,	BROWN,	1755	365
Douglas,	HOME,	1757	387
Cleone,	DODSLEY,	1759	406
The Orphan of China,	MURPHY,	1759	425
Zenobia,	DITTO,	1768	448

		Year.	Page.
The Grecian Daughter,	MURPHY,	1772	471
The Earl of Warwick,	FRANKLIN,	1766	493
Matilda,	DITTO,	1775	512
The Countess of Salisbury,	HARTSON,	1767	531
The Mysterious Mother,	WALPOLE,	1768	549
Comus,	MILTON,	1637	571
The Fair Apostate,	MACDONALD,	1788	587

THE

BRITISH DRAMA.

THE

REVENGE.

BY

YOUNG.

PROLOGUE.

BY A FRIEND.

Oft has the buskin'd muse, with action mean,
Debas'd the glory of the tragic scene:
While puny villains, dress'd in purple pride,
With crimes obscene, the heaven-born rage belied.
To her belongs to mourn the hero's fate,
To trace the errors of the wise and great;
To mark the excess of passions too refin'd,
And paint the tumults of a godlike mind;
Where, mov'd with rage, exalted thoughts combine,
And darkest deeds with beauteous colours shine.
So lights and shades, in a well-mingled draught,
By curious touch of artful pencils wrought,
With soft deceit amuse the doubtful eye,
Pleas'd with the conflict of the various dye.
Thus through the following scenes, with sweet surprise,
Virtue and guilt in dread confusion rise,
And love and hate, at once, and grief and joy,
Pity and rage, their mingled force employ.
Here the soft virgin sees, with secret shame,
Her charms excelled by friendship's purer flame,
Forc'd with reluctant virtue to approve
The generous hero who rejects her love.
Behold him there, with gloomy passions stain'd,
A wife suspected, and an injur'd friend;
Yet such the toil, where innocence is caught,
That rash suspicion seems without a fault.
We dread a while lest beauty should succeed,
And almost wish even virtue's self may bleed.
Mark well the black revenge, the cruel guile,
The traitor-fiend trampling the lovely spoil
Of beauty, truth, and innocence opprest;
Then let the rage of furies fire your breast.
Yet may his mighty wrongs, his just disdain,
His bleeding country, his lov'd father slain,
His martial pride, your admiration raise,
And crown him with involuntary praise.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Don Alonzo, *the Spanish General.*
Don Carlos, *his friend.*
Don Alvarez, *a courtier.*
Don Manuel, *attendant of* Don Carlos.
Zanga, *a captive Moor.*

WOMEN.

Leonora, Alvarez's *daughter.*
Isabella, *the Moor's mistress.*

Scene,—*Spain.*

THE

REVENGE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Battlements, with a Sea Prospect.*

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. Whether first nature, or long want of peace,
Has wrought my mind to this, I cannot tell:
But horrors now are not displeasing to me:
[*Thunder.*
I like this rocking of the battlements.
Rage on, ye winds! burst, clouds, and waters roar!
You bear a just resemblance of my fortune,
And suit the gloomy habit of my soul.

Enter ISABELLA.

Who's there? My love?
Isa. Why have you left my bed?
Your absence more affrights me than the storm.
Zan. The dead alone, in such a night, can rest,
And I indulge my meditation here.
Woman, away. I chuse to be alone.
Isa. I know you do, and therefore will not leave you;
Excuse me, Zanga, therefore dare not leave you.
Is this a night for walks of contemplation?
Something unusual hangs upon your heart,
And I will know it: by our loves I will.
To you I sacrificed my virgin fame;
Ask I too much to share in your distress?
Zan. In tears? Thou fool! Then hear me, and be plunged
In hell's abyss, if ever it escape thee.
To strike thee with astonishment at once,
I hate Alonzo. First recover that,
And then thou shalt hear farther.
Isa. Hate Alonzo!
I own, I thought Alonzo most your friend,
And that he lost the master in that name.
Zan. Hear then. 'Tis twice three years since that great man
(Great let me call him, for he conquered me)
Made me the captive of his arm in fight.
He slew my father, and threw chains o'er me,
While I, with pious rage, pursued revenge.
I then was young; he placed me near his person
And thought me not dishonoured by his service.
One day, (may that returning day be night,
The stain, the curse, of each succeeding year!)
For something, or for nothing, in his pride
He struck me—While I tell it, do I live?
He smote me on the cheek—I did not stab him,
For that were poor revenge——E'er since, his folly
Has strove to bury it beneath a heap
Of kindnesses, and thinks it is forgot.
Insolent thought! and like a second blow!
Affronts are innocent, where men are worthless;
And such alone can wisely drop revenge.
Isa. But with more temper, Zanga, tell your story;
To see your strong emotions startles me.
Zan. Yes, woman, with the temper that befits it.
Has the dark adder venom? So have I,
When trod upon. Proud Spaniard, thou shalt feel me!
For from that day, that day of my dishonour,
I from that day have cursed the rising sun,
Which never failed to tell me of my shame.
I from that day have blessed the coming night,
Which promised to conceal it; but in vain;
The blow returned for ever in my dream.
Yet on I toiled, and groaned for an occasion
Of ample vengeance; none is yet arrived.
Howe'er, at present I conceive warm hopes
Of what may wound him sore in his ambition,
Life of his life, and dearer than his soul.
By nightly march he purposed to surprise
The Moorish camp; but I have taken care
They shall be ready to receive his favour.
Failing in this, a cast of utmost moment,
Would darken all the conquests he has won.
Isa. Just as I entered, an express arrived.
Zan. To whom?
Isa. His friend, Don Carlos.
Zan. Be propitious,
Oh, Mahomet, on this important hour,
And give, at length, my famished soul revenge!
What is revenge, but courage to call in

Our honour's debts, and wisdom to convert
Others' self-love into our own protection?
But see, the morning dawns;
I'll seek Don Carlos, and enquire my fate.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Palace.*

Enter Don MANUEL *and Don* CARLOS.

Man. My lord Don Carlos, what brings your express?

Car. Alonzo's glory, and the Moors' defeat.
The field is strewed with twice ten thousand slain,
Though he suspects his measures were betrayed.
He'll soon arrive. Oh, how I long to embrace
The first of heroes, and the best of friends!
I loved fair Leonora long before
The chance of battle gave me to the Moors,
From whom so late Alonzo set me free:
And while I groaned in bondage, I deputed
This great Alonzo, whom her father honours,
To be my gentle advocate in love,
To stir her heart, and fan its fires for me.

Man. And what success?

Car. Alas, the cruel maid!——
Indeed her father, who, though high at court,
And powerful with the king, has wealth at heart,
To heal his devastation from the Moors,
Knowing I am richly freighted from the east,
My fleet now sailing in the sight of Spain,
(Heaven guard it safe through such a dreadful storm!)
Caresses me, and urges her to wed.

Man. Her aged father, see,
Leads her this way.

Car. She looks like radiant Truth,
Brought forward by the hand of hoary Time.
You to the port with speed, 'tis possible
Some vessel is arrived. Heaven grant it bring
Tidings, which Carlos may receive with joy!

Enter Don ALVAREZ *and* LEONORA.

Alv. Don Carlos, I am labouring in your favour,
With all a parent's soft authority,
And earnest counsel.

Car. Angels second you!
For all my bliss or misery hangs on it.

Alv. Daughter, the happiness of life depends
On our discretion, and a prudent choice;
Look into those they call unfortunate,
And, closer viewed, you'll find they are unwise:
Some flaw in their own conduct lies beneath,
And 'tis the trick of fools, to save their credit,
Which brought another language into use.
Don Carlos is of ancient, noble blood,
And then his wealth might mend a prince's fortune.
For him the sun is labouring in the mines,
A faithful slave, and turning earth to gold;
His keels are freighted with that sacred power,
By which even kings and emperors are made.
Sir, you have my good wishes, and I hope
[*To* CARLOS.
My daughter is not indisposed to hear you. [*Exit.*

Car. Oh, Leonora! why art thou in tears?
Because I am less wretched than I was?
Before your father gave me leave to woo you,
Hushed was your bosom, and your eyes serene.
Will you for ever help me to new pains,
And keep reserves of torment in your hand,
To let them loose on every dawn of joy?

Leon. Think you my father too indulgent to me,
That he claims no dominion o'er my tears?
A daughter sure may be right dutiful,
Whose tears alone are free from a restraint.

Car. Ah, my torn heart!

Leon. Regard not me, my lord;
I shall obey my father.

Car. Disobey him,
Rather than come thus coldly, than come thus
With absent eyes, and alienated mien,
Suffering address, the victim of my love.
Oh, let me be undone the common way,
And have the common comfort to be pitied,
And not be ruined in the mask of bliss,
And so be envied, and be wretched too!
Love calls for love. Not all the pride of beauty,
Those eyes that tell us what the sun is made of,
Those lips, whose touch is to be bought with life,
Those hills of driven snow, which seen are felt;
All these, possessed, are nought but as they are
The proof, the substance of an inward passion,
And the rich plunder of a taken heart.

Leon. Alas, my lord, we are too delicate;
And when we grasp the happiness we wished,
We call on wit to argue it away:
A plainer man would not feel half your pains;
But some have too much wisdom to be happy.

Car. Had I known this before, it had been well:
I had not then solicited your father
To add to my distress; as you behave,
Your father's kindness stabs me to the heart.
Give me your hand—nay, give it, Leonora;
You give it not—nay, yet you give it not—
I ravish it.

Leon. I pray, my lord, no more.

Car. Ah, why so sad? You know each sigh does shake me:
Sighs there, are tempests here.
I've heard, bad men would be unblest in Heaven:
What is my guilt, that makes me so with you?
Have I not languished prostrate at thy feet?
Have I not lived whole days upon thy sight?
Have I not seen thee where thou hast not been,
And, mad with the idea, clasped the wind,
And doated upon nothing?

Leon. Court me not,
Good Carlos, by recounting of my faults,
And telling how ungrateful I have been.
Alas, my lord, if talking would prevail,
I could suggest much better arguments
Than those regards you threw away on me;
Your valour, honour, wisdom, praised by all.
But bid physicians talk our veins to temper,
And with an argument new-set a pulse;
Then think, my lord, of reasoning into love.

Car. Must I despair then? Do not shake me thus:

My tempest-beaten heart is cold to death;
Ah, turn, and let me warm me in thy beauties!
Heavens! what a proof I gave, but two nights past,
Of matchless love! To fling me at thy feet,
I slighted friendship, and I flew from fame,
Nor heard the summons of the next day's battle:
But darting headlong to thy arms, I left
The promised fight, I left Alonzo too,
To stand the war, and quell a world alone.
[*Trumpets.*

Leon. The victor comes. My lord, I must withdraw.

Car. And must you go?

Leon. Why should you wish me stay?
Your friend's arrival will bring comfort to you,
My presence none; it pains you and myself;
For both our sakes, permit me to withdraw.
[*Exit.*

Car. Sure, there is no peril but in love. Oh, how
My foes would boast to see me look so pale!

Enter Don ALONZO.

Car. Alonzo!

Alon. Carlos! I am whole again;
Clasped in thy arms, it makes my heart entire.

Car. Whom dare I thus embrace? The conqueror
Of Afric?

Alon. Yes, much more—Don Carlos' friend.
The conquest of the world would cost me dear,
Should it beget one thought of distance in thee.
I rise in virtues to come nearer to thee,
I conquer with Don Carlos in my eye,
And thus I claim my victory's reward.
[*Embracing him.*

Car. A victory indeed! your godlike arm
Has made one spot the grave of Africa,
Such numbers fell! and the survivors fled,
As frighted passengers from off the strand,
When the tempestuous sea comes roaring on them.

Alon. 'Twas Carlos conquered, 'twas his cruel chains
Inflamed me to a rage unknown before,
And threw my former actions far behind.

Car. I love fair Leonora,—how I love her!
Yet still I find (I know not how it is)
Another heart, another soul for thee.
Thy friendship warms, it raises, it transports
Like music; pure the joy, without allay,
Whose very rapture is tranquillity:
But love, like wine, gives a tumultuous bliss,
Heightened, indeed, beyond all mortal pleasures,
But mingles pangs and madness in the bowl.

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. Manuel, my lord, returning from the port,
On business both of moment and of haste,
Humbly begs leave to speak in private with you.

Car. In private! Ha! Alonzo, I will return:
No business can detain me long from thee. [*Exit.*

Zan. My lord Alonzo, I obeyed your orders.

Alon. Will the fair Leonora pass this way?

Zan. She will, my lord, and soon.

Alon. Come near me, Zanga;
For I dare open all my heart to thee.
Never was such a day of triumph known!
There's not a wounded captive in my train,
That slowly followed my proud chariot wheels,
With half a life, and beggary, and chains,
But is a god to me: I am most wretched.
In his captivity thou know'st, Don Carlos,
My friend, (and never was a friend more dear)
Deputed me his advocate in love,
To talk to Leonora's heart, and make
A tender party in her thoughts for him.
What did I do? I loved myself. Indeed,
One thing there is might lessen my offence,
(If such offence admits of being lessened)
I thought him dead; for (by what fate I know not)
His letters never reached me.

Zan. Thanks to Zanga.
Who thence contrived that evil which has happened. [*Aside.*

Alon. Yes, cursed of Heaven! I loved myself, and now,
In a late action rescued from the Moors,
I have brought home my rival in my friend.

Zan. We hear, my lord, that in that action too,
Your interposing arm preserved his life.

Alon. It did—with more than the expence of mine;
For, oh, this day is mentioned for their nuptials.
But see, she comes—I'll take my leave, and die.

Zan. Hadst thou a thousand lives, thy death would please me.
Unhappy fate! My country overcome!
My six years hope of vengeance quite expired!
Would nature were—I will not fall alone;
But others' groans shall tell the world my death.
[*Aside, and exit.*

Enter LEONORA.

Alon. When nature ends with anguish like to this,
Sinners shall take their last leave of the sun,
And bid his light adieu.

Leon. The mighty conqueror
Dismayed! I thought you gave the foe your sorrows.

Alon. Oh, cruel insult! Are those tears your sport,
Which nothing but a love for you could draw!
Afric I quelled, in hope by that to purchase
Your leave to sigh unscorned; but I complain not;
'Twas but a world, and you are—Leonora.

Leon. That passion, which you boast of, is your guilt,
A treason to your friend. You think mean of me,
To plead your crimes as motives of my love.

Alon. You, madam, ought to thank those crimes you blame;
'Tis they permit you to be thus inhuman,
Without the censure both of earth and heaven—
I fondly thought a last look might be kind.
Farewell for ever! This severe behaviour
Has, to my comfort, made it sweet to die.

Leon. Farewell for ever! Sweet to die! Oh, Heaven!— [*Aside.*
Alonzo, stay; you must not thus escape me,
But hear your guilt at large.
Alon. Oh, Leonora!
What could I do! In duty to my friend,
I saw you; and to see is to admire.
For Carlos did I plead, and most sincerely;
Witness the thousand agonies it cost me!
You know I did. I sought but your esteem;
If that is guilt, an angel had been guilty.
I often sighed, nay, wept, but could not help it:
And sure it is no crime to be in pain.
But grant my crime was great; I am greatly cursed;
What would you more? Am I not most undone?
This usage is like stamping on the murdered,
When life is fled; most barbarous and unjust.
Leon. If from your guilt none suffered but yourself,
It might be so——Farewell. [*Going.*
Alon. Who suffers with me?
Leon. Enjoy your ignorance, and let me go.
Alon. Alas! what is there I can fear to know,
Since I already know your hate? Your actions
Have long since told me that.
Leon. They flattered you.
Alon. How! flattered me!
Leon. Oh, search in fate no farther!
I hate thee—Oh, Alonzo, how I hate thee!
Alon. Indeed! and do you weep for hatred too?
Oh, what a doubtful torment heaves my heart!
I hope it most, and yet I dread it more.
Should it be so—should her tears flow from thence,
How would my soul blaze up in ecstacy!
Ah no! how sink into the depth of horrors!
Leon. Why would you force my stay?
Alon. What mean these tears?
Leon. I weep by chance, nor have my tears a meaning;
But, oh! when first I saw Alonzo's tears,
I knew their meaning well!
[ALON. *falls passionately on his knees, and takes her hand.*
Alon. Heavens! what is this? That excellence, for which
Desire was planted in the heart of man;
Virtue's supreme reward on this side Heaven;
The cordial of my soul—and this destroys me—
Indeed, I flattered me that thou didst hate.
Leon. Alonzo, pardon me the injury
Of loving you. I struggled with my passion,
And struggled long: let that be some excuse.
Alon. Unkind, you know I think your love a blessing
Beyond all human blessings! 'tis the price
Of sighs and groans, and a whole year of dying.
But, oh! the curse of curses!——Oh, my friend!——
Leon. Alas!
Alon. What says my love? Speak, Leonora.
Leon. Was it for you, my lord, to be so quick
In finding out objections to our love?
Think you so strong my love, or weak my virtue,
It was unsafe to leave that part to me?
Alon. Is not the day, then, fixed for your espousals?
Leon. Indeed, my father once had thoughts that way;
But, marking how the marriage pained my heart,
Long he stood doubtful; but at last resolved,
Your counsel, which determines him in all,
Should finish the debate.
Alon. O, agony!
Must I not only lose her, but be made
Myself the instrument? Not only die,
But plunge the dagger in my heart myself?
This is refining on calamity.
Leon. What! do you tremble lest you should be mine?
For what else can you tremble? Not for that
My father places in your power to alter.
Alon. What's in my power? Oh, yes; to stab my friend!
Leon. To stab your friend were barbarous indeed;
Spare him—and murder me. I own, Alonzo,
You well may wonder at such words as these;
I start at them myself; they fright my nature.
Great is my fault; but blame me not alone:
Give him a little blame who took such pains
To make me guilty.
Alon. Torment! [*After a pause,* LEON. *speaks.*
Leon. O my shame!
I sue, and sue in vain: it is most just;
When women sue, they sue to be denied.
You hate me, you despise me! you do well;
For what I've done I hate and scorn myself.
Oh, night, fall on me! I shall blush to death.
Alon. First perish all!
Leon. Say, what have you resolved?
My father comes; what answer will you give him?
Alon. What answer! let me look upon that face,
And read it there.—Devote thee to another!
Not to be borne! a second look undoes me.
Leon. And why undo you? Is it then, my lord,
So terrible to yield to your own wishes,
Because they happen to concur with mine?
Cruel! to take such pains to win a heart,
Which you was conscious you must break with parting.
Alon. No, Leonora, I am thine for ever,
[*Runs and embraces her.*
In spite of Carlos—Ha! who's that? My friend!
[*Starts wide from her.*
Alas, I see him pale! I hear him groan!
He foams, he tears his hair, he raves, he bleeds,
(I know him by myself) he dies distracted!
Leon. How dreadful to be cut from what we love!
Alon. Ah, speak no more!
Leon. And tied to what we hate!
Alon. Oh!
Leon. Is it possible?
Alon. Death!
Leon. Can you?
Alon. Oh——

Yes, take a limb; but let my virtue 'scape.
Alas, my soul, this moment I die for thee!
[*Breaks away.*
Leon. And are you perjured then for virtue's sake?
How often have you sworn!—but go, for ever.
[*Swoons.*
Alon. Heart of my heart, and essence of my joy!
Where art thou! —Oh, I'm thine, and thine for ever!
The groans of friendship shall be heard no more.
For whatsoever crime I can commit,
I've felt the pains already.
Leon. Hold, Alonzo,
And hear a maid whom doubly thou hast conquered.
I love thy virtue as I love thy person,
And I adore thee for the pains it gave me:
But as I felt the pains, I'll reap the fruit;
I'll shine out in my turn, and shew the world
Thy great example was not lost upon me.
Be it enough that I have once been guilty;
In sight of such a pattern, to persist,
Ill suits a person honoured with your love.
My other titles to that bliss are weak;
I must deserve it by refusing it.
Thus then I tear me from thy hopes for ever.
Shall I contribute to Alonzo's crimes?
No, though the life-blood gushes from my heart.
You shall not be ashamed of Leonora;
Or that late time may put our names together.
Nay, never shrink; take back the bright example
You lately lent; Oh, take it while you may,
While I can give it you, and be immortal! [*Exit.*
Alon. She's gone, and I shall see that face no more,
But pine in absence, and till death adore.
When with cold dew my fainting brow is hung,
And my eyes darken, from my faultering tongue
Her name will tremble with a feeble moan,
And love with fate divide my dying groan.
[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

Enter Don MANUEL *and* ZANGA.

Zan. If this be true, I cannot blame your pain
For wretched Carlos; 'tis but human in you.
But when arrived your dismal news?
Man. This hour.
Zan. What, not a vessel saved?
Man. All, all the storm
Devoured; and now o'er his late envied fortune
The dolphins bound, and watry mountains roar,
Triumphant in his ruin.
Zan. Is Alvarez
Determined to deny his daughter to him?
That treasure was on shore; must that too join
The common wreck!
Man. Alvarez pleads, indeed,
That Leonora's heart is disinclined,
And pleads that only; so it was this morning,
When he concurred: the tempest broke the match,
And sunk his favour, when it sunk the gold.
The love of gold is double in his heart,
The vice of age, and of Alvarez too.
Zan. How does Don Carlos bear it?
Man. Like a man,
Whose heart feels most a human heart can feel,
And reasons best a human heart can reason.
Zan. But is he then in absolute despair?
Man. Never to see his Leonora more.
And, quite to quench all future hope, Alvarez
Urges Alonzo to espouse his daughter
This very day; for he has learnt their loves.
Zan. Ha! was not that received with ecstacy
By Don Alonzo?
Man. Yes, at first; but soon
A damp came o'er him, it would kill his friend.
Zan. Not if his friend consented; and since now
He cannot himself espouse her——
Man. Yet, to ask it
Has something shocking to a generous mind;
At least, Alonzo's spirit startles at it.
Wide is the distance between our despair,
And giving up a mistress to another.
But I must leave you. Carlos wants support
In his severe affliction. [*Exit.*
Zan. Ha, it dawns!——
It rises to me, like a new-found world
To mariners long time distressed at sea,
Sore from a storm, and all their viands spent;
Or like the sun just rising out of chaos,
Some dregs of ancient night not quite purged off;
But I shall finish it.——Hoa, Isabella!

Enter ISABELLA.

I thought of dying; better things come forward;
Vengeance is still alive; from her dark covert,
With all her snakes erect upon her crest,
She stalks in view, and fires me with her charms.
When, Isabella, arrived Don Carlos here?
Isa. Two nights ago.
Zan. That was the very night
Before the battle—Memory, set down that;
It has the essence of the crocodile,
Though yet but in the shell—I'll give it birth.
What time did he return?
Isa. At midnight.
Zan. So——
Say, did he see that night his Leonora?
Isa. No, my good lord.
Zan. No matter—tell me, woman,
Is not Alonzo rather brave than cautious,
Honest than subtle, above fraud himself,

Slow, therefore, to suspect it in another?
Isa. You best can judge; but so the world thinks of him.
Zan. Why, that was well—go, fetch my tablets hither. [*Exit* ISA.
Two nights ago my father's sacred shade
Thrice stalked around my bed, and smiled upon me;
He smiled a joy then little understood——
It must be so—and if so, it is vengeance
Worth waking of the dead for.

Re-enter ISABELLA *with the tablets;* ZANGA *writes, then reads as to himself.*

Thus it stands——
The father's fixed—Don Carlos cannot wed——
Alonzo may——but that will hurt his friend——
Nor can he ask his leave—or, if he did,
He might not gain it—It is hard to give
Our own consent to ills, though we must bear them.
Were it not then a master-piece, worth all
The wisdom I can boast, first to persuade
Alonzo to request it of his friend,
His friend to grant—then from that very grant,
The strongest proof of friendship man can give,
(And other motives) to work out a cause
Of jealousy, to rack Alonzo's peace?——
I have turned o'er the catalogue of human woes,
Which sting the heart of man, and find none equal.
It is the Hydra of calamities,
The seven-fold death; the jealous are the damned.
Oh, jealousy, each other passion's calm
To thee, thou conflagration of the soul!
Thou king of torments, thou grand counterpoise
For all the transports beauty can inspire!
Isa. Alonzo comes this way.
Zan. Most opportunely.
Withdraw—Ye subtle dæmons, which reside [*Exit* ISA.
In courts, and do your work with bows and smiles,
That little enginery, more mischievous
Than fleets and armies, and the cannon's murder,
Teach me to look a lie; give me your maze
Of gloomy thought and intricate design,
To catch the man I hate, and then devour!—

Enter Don ALONZO.

My lord, I give you joy.
Alon. Of what, good Zanga?
Zan. Is not the lovely Leonora yours?
Alon. What will become of Carlos?
Zan. He's your friend;
And since he can't espouse the fair himself,
Will take some comfort from Alonzo's fortune.
Alon. Alas, thou little know'st the force of love!
Love reigns a sultan with unrivalled sway;
Puts all relations, friendship's self to death,
If once he's jealous of it. I love Carlos;
Yet well I know what pangs I felt this morning
At his intended nuptials. For myself
I then felt pains, which now for him I feel.
Zan. You will not wed her then?
Alon. Not instantly.
Insult his broken heart the very moment!
Zan. I understand you: but you'll wed hereafter,
When your friend's gone, and his first pain assuaged.
Alon. Am I to blame in that?
Zan. My lord, I love
Your very errors; they are born from virtue.
Your friendship (and what nobler passion claims
The heart?) does lead you blindfold to your ruin.
Consider, wherefore did Alvarez break
Don Carlos' match, and wherefore urge Alonzo's?
'Twas the same cause, the love of wealth. To-morrow
May see Alonzo in Don Carlos' fortune;
A higher bidder is a better friend,
And there are princes sigh for Leonora.
When your friend's gone you'll wed; why, then, the cause,
Which gives you Leonora now, will cease.
Carlos has lost her; should you lose her too,
Why, then you heap new torments on your friend,
By that respect which laboured to relieve him.—
'Tis well—he is disturbed; it makes him pause.
[*Aside.*
Alon. Think'st thou, my Zanga, should I ask Don Carlos,
His goodness would consent that I should wed her?
Zan. I know it would.
Alon. But then the cruelty
To ask it, and for me to ask it of him!
Zan. Methinks you are severe upon your friend.
Who was it gave him liberty and life?
Alon. That is the very reason which forbids it.
Were I a stranger, I could freely speak;
In me it so resembles a demand,
Exacting of a debt, it shocks my nature.
Zan. My lord, you know the sad alternative.
Is Leonora worth one pang, or not?
It hurts not me, my lord, but as I love you:
Warmly as you I wish Don Carlos well,
But I am likewise Don Alonzo's friend:
There all the difference lies between us two.
In me, my lord, you hear another self;
And, give me leave to add, a better too,
Cleared from those errors, which, though caused by virtue,
Are such as may hereafter give you pain——
Don Lopez of Castile would not demur thus.
Alon. Perish the name! What, sacrifice the fair
To age and ugliness, because set in gold?
I'll to Don Carlos, if my heart will let me.
I have not seen him since his sore affliction;
But shunned it, as too terrible to bear.
How shall I bear it now? I'm struck already.
[*Exit.*
Zan. Half of my work is done. I must secure
Don Carlos, ere Alonzo speak with him.
[*He gives a message to a Servant, then returns.*
Proud hated Spain, oft drenched in Moorish blood!
Dost thou not feel a deadly foe within thee?
Shake not thy towers where'er I pass along,

Conscious of ruin, and their great destroyer?
Shake to the centre, if Alonzo's dear!
Look down, oh, holy prophet! see me torture
This Christian dog, this infidel, who dares
To smite thy votaries, and spurn thy law;
And yet hopes pleasure from two radiant eyes,
Which look as they were lighted up for thee!
Shall he enjoy thy paradise below?
Blast the bold thought, and curse him with her charms!
But see, the melancholy lover comes.

Enter Don CARLOS.

Car. Hope, thou hast told me lies from day to day,
For more than twenty years; vile promiser!
None here are happy, but the very fool,
Or very wise; and I wasn't fool enough
To smile in vanities, and hug a shadow;
Nor have I wisdom to elaborate
An artificial happiness from pains:
Even joys are pains, because they cannot last.
[*Sighs.*
Yet much is talked of bliss; it is the art
Of such as have the world in their possession,
To give it a good name, that fools may envy;
For envy to small minds is flattery.
How many lift the head, look gay, and smile
Against their consciences! and this we know,
Yet, knowing, disbelieve, and try again
What we have tried, and struggle with conviction.
Each new experience gives the former credit;
And reverend grey threescore is but a voucher,
That thirty told us true.

Zan. My noble lord,
I mourn your fate: But are no hopes surviving?

Car. No hopes. Alvarez has a heart of steel.
'Tis fixed—'tis past—'tis absolute despair!

Zan. You wanted not to have your heart made tender,
By your own pains, to feel a friend's distress.

Car. I understand you well. Alonzo loves;
I pity him.

Zan. I dare be sworn you do.
Yet he has other thoughts.

Car. What canst thou mean?

Zan. Indeed he has; and fears to ask a favour
A stranger from a stranger might request;
What costs you nothing, yet is all to him:
Nay, what indeed will to your glory add,
For nothing more than wishing your friend well.

Car. I pray, be plain; his happiness is mine.

Zan. He loves to death; but so reveres his friend,
He can't persuade his heart to wed the maid
Without your leave, and that he fears to ask.
In perfect tenderness I urged him to it.
Knowing the deadly sickness of his heart,
Your overflowing goodness to your friend,
Your wisdom, and despair yourself to wed her,
I wrung a promise from him he would try;
And now I come, a mutual friend to both,
Without his privacy, to let you know it,
And to prepare you kindly to receive him.

Car. Ha! if he weds I am undone indeed;
Not Don Alvarez' self can then relieve me.

Zan. Alas, my lord, you know his heart is steel!
'Tis fixed, 'tis past, 'tis absolute despair.

Car. Oh, cruel Heaven! and is it not enough
That I must never, never see her more?
Say, is it not enough that I must die;
But I must be tormented in the grave?—
Ask my consent!—Must I then give her to him?
Lead to his nuptial sheets the blushing maid?
Oh! Leonora!—never, never, never!

Zan. A storm of plagues upon him! he refuses.
[*Aside.*

Car. What, wed her?—and to-day?

Zan. To-day, or never.
To-morrow may some wealthier lover bring,
And then Alonzo is thrown out like you:
Then whom shall he condemn for his misfortune?
Carlos is an Alvarez to his love.

Car. Oh, torment! whither shall I turn?

Zan. To peace.

Car. Which is the way?

Zan. His happiness is yours—
I dare not disbelieve you.

Car. Kill my friend!
Or worse—Alas! and can there be a worse?
A worse there is; nor can my nature bear it.

Zan. You have convinced me 'tis a dreadful task.
I find Alonzo's quitting her this morning
For Carlos' sake, in tenderness to you,
Betrayed me to believe it less severe
Than I perceive it is.

Car. Thou dost upbraid me,

Zan. No, my good lord; but since you can't comply,
'Tis my misfortune that I mentioned it;
For had I not, Alonzo would indeed
Have died, as now, but not by your decree.

Car. By my decree! Do I decree his death?
I do—Shall I then lead her to his arms?
Oh, which side shall I take? Be stabbed, or—stab?
'Tis equal death! a choice of agonies.
Ah, no! all other agonies are ease
To one—Oh, Leonora! never, never!
Go, Zanga, go, defer the dreadful trial,
Though but a day; something, perchance, may happen
To soften all to friendship and to love.
Go, stop my friend, let me not see him now;
But save us from an interview of death.

Zan. My lord, I am bound in duty to obey you—
If I not bring him, may Alonzo prosper!
[*Aside and exit.*

Car. What is this world! Thy school, Oh misery!
Our only lesson is to learn to suffer;
And he, who knows not that, was born for nothing.
Though deep my pangs, and heavy at my heart,
My comfort is, each moment takes away
A grain, at least, from the dead load that's on me,
And gives a nearer prospect of the grave.

But put it most severely—should I live—
Live long—alas, there is no length in time!
Not in thy time, Oh man!—What's fourscore years?
Nay, what, indeed, the age of time itself,
Since cut from out eternity's wide round?
Away, then!—To a mind resolved and wise,
There is an impotence in misery,
Which makes me smile, when all its shafts are in me.
Yet Leonora——she can make time long,
Its nature alter, as she altered mine.
While in the lustre of her charms I lay,
Whole summer suns rolled unperceived away;
I years for days, and days for moments told,
And was surprised to hear that I grew old.
Now fate does rigidly its dues regain,
And every moment is an age of pain.

As he is going out, enter ZANGA *and Don* ALONZO. ZANGA *stops Don* CARLOS.

Zan. Is this Don Carlos? this the boasted friend?
How can you turn your back upon his sadness?
Look on him, and then leave him if you can.
Whose sorrows thus depress him? Not his own:
This moment he could wed without your leave.
Car. I cannot yield; nor can I bear his griefs.
Alonzo! [*Going to him, and taking his hand.*
Alon. Oh, Carlos!
Car. Pray, forbear.
Alon. Art thou undone, and shall Alonzo smile?
Alonzo, who, perhaps, in some degree
Contributed to cause thy dreadful fate?
I was deputed guardian of thy love;
But, Oh, I loved myself! Pour down afflictions
On this devoted head, make me your mark;
And be the world by my example taught,
How sacred it should hold the name of friend!
Car. You charge yourself unjustly; well I know
The only cause of my severe affliction,
Alvarez, cursed Alvarez! So much anguish,
Felt for so small a failure, is one merit
Which faultless virtue wants. The crime was mine,
Who placed thee there, where only thou couldst fail;
Though well I knew that dreadful post of honour
I gave thee to maintain. Ah! who could bear
Those eyes unhurt? The wounds myself have felt
(Which wounds alone should cause me to condemn thee)
They plead in thy excuse; for I too strove
To shun those fires, and found 'twas not in man.
Alon. You cast in shades the failure of a friend,
And soften all; but think not to deceive me;
I know my guilt, and I implore your pardon,
As the sole glimpse I can obtain of peace.
Car. Pardon for him, who but this morning threw
Fair Leonora from his heart, all bathed
In ceaseless tears, and blushing for her love!
Who, like a rose-leaf wet with morning dew,
Would have stuck close, and clung for ever there!
But 'twas in thee, through fondness for thy friend,
To shut thy bosom against ecstacies;
For which, while this pulse beats, it beats to thee;
While this blood flows, it flows for my Alonzo,
And every wish is levelled at thy joy.
Zan. [*To* ALONZO.] My lord, my lord, this is your time to speak.
Alon. [*To* ZAN.] Because he's kind? It therefore is the worst;
For 'tis his kindness which I fear to hurt.
Shall the same moment see him sink in woes,
And me providing for a flood of joys,
Rich in the plunder of his happiness?
No, I may die; but I can never speak.
Car. Now, now it comes! they are concerting it!
The first word strikes me dead—Oh, Leonora!
And shall another taste her fragrant breath?
Who knows what after-time may bring to pass?
Fathers may change, and I may wed her still.
[*Aside.*
Alon. [*To* ZAN.] Do I not see him quite possessed with anguish,
Which, like a dæmon, writhes him to and fro;
And shall I pour in new? No, fond desire!
No, love! one pang at parting, and farewell;
I have no other love but Carlos now.
Car. Alas! my friend, why with such eager grasp
Dost press my hand, and weep upon my cheek?
Alon. If, after death, our forms (as some believe)
Shall be transparent, naked every thought,
And friends meet friends, and read each other's hearts,
Thou'lt know one day that thou wert held most dear.
Farewell.
Car. Alonzo, stay—he cannot speak—
[*Holds him.*
Lest it should grieve me—Shall I be outdone?
And lose in glory, as I lose in love? [*Aside.*
I take it much unkindly, my Alonzo,
You think so meanly of me, not to speak,
When well I know your heart is near to bursting.
Have you forgot how you have bound me to you?
Your smallest friendship's liberty and life.
Alon. There, there it is, my friend! it cuts me there.
How dreadful is it to a generous mind
To ask, when sure he cannot be denied!
Car. How greatly thought! In all he towers above me. [*Aside.*
Then you confess you would ask something of me?
Alon. No, on my soul.
Zan. [*To* ALON.] Then lose her.
Car. Glorious spirit!
Why what a pang has he run through for this!
By Heaven, I envy him his agonies.

Why was not mine the most illustrious lot,
Of starting at one action from below,
And flaming up into consummate greatness?
Ha! angels strengthen me! It shall be so——
I cannot want strength. Great actions once conceived,
Strengthen like wine, and animate the soul,
And call themselves to being. [*Aside.*] My Alonzo!
Since thy great soul disdains to make request,
Receive with favour that I make to thee.

Alon. What means my Carlos?

Car. Pray observe me well.
Fate and Alvarez tore her from my heart,
And plucking up my love, they had well nigh
Plucked up life too, for they were twined together.
Of that no more—What now does reason bid?
I cannot wed—Farewell my happiness!
But, oh my soul, with care provide for hers!
In life, how weak, how helpless is woman!
Soon hurt; in happiness itself unsafe,
And often wounded while she plucks the rose;
So properly the object of affliction,
That Heaven is pleased to make distress become her,
And dresses her most amiably in tears.
Take then my heart in dowry with the fair!
Be thou her guardian, and thou must be mine;
Shut out the thousand pressing ills of life
With thy surrounding arms—Do this, and then
Set down the liberty and life thou gavest me,
As little things, as essays of thy goodness,
And rudiments of friendship so divine.

Alon. There is a grandeur in thy goodness to me,
Which with thy foes would render thee adored.
But have a care, nor think I can be pleased
With any thing that lays in pains for thee.
Thou dost dissemble, and thy heart's in tears.

Car. My heart's in health, my spirits dance their round,
And at my eyes pleasure looks out in smiles.

Alon. And canst thou, canst thou part with Leonora?

Car. I do not part with her, I give her thee.

Alon. O Carlos!

Car. Don't disturb me, I'm sincere,
Nor is it more than simple justice in me.
This morn didst thou resign her for my sake;
I but perform a virtue learnt from thee,
Discharge a debt, and pay her to thy wishes.

Alon. Ah, how?—But think not words were ever made
For such occasions. Silence, tears, embraces,
Are languid eloquence; I'll seek relief
In absence from the pain of so much goodness;
There thank the blest above, thy sole superiors,
Adore, and raise my thoughts of them by thee.
[*Exit.*

Zan. Thus far success has crowned my boldest hope.
My next care is to hasten these new nuptials,
And then my master-works begin to play.
[*Aside.*
Why this was greatly done, without one sigh
[*To* CAR.
To carry such a glory to its period.

Car. Too soon thou praisest me. He's gone, and now
I must unsluice my overburthened heart,
And let it flow. I would not grieve my friend
With tears, nor interrupt my great design;
Great sure as ever human breast durst think of.
But now my sorrows, long with pain suppressed,
Burst their confinement with impetuous sway,
O'er-swell all bounds, and bear even life away.
So, till the day was won, the Greek renowned
With anguish bore the arrow in his wound,
Then drew the shaft from out his tortured side,
Let gush the torrent of his blood, and died.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. O joy, thou welcome stranger! twice three years
I have not felt thy vital beam; but now
It warms my veins, and plays around my heart:
A fiery instinct lifts me from the ground,
And I could mount! The spirits numberless
Of my dear countrymen, which yesterday
Left their poor bleeding bodies on the field,
Are all assembled here, and o'er-inform me.——
O, bridegroom! great indeed thy present bliss;
Yet even by me unenvied; for be sure
It is thy last, last smile, that which now
Sits on thy cheek; enjoy it while thou mayest;
Anguish, and groans, and death bespeak to morrow.—
My Isabella!

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. What commands my Moor?

Zan. My fair ally! my lovely minister!
'Twas well Alvarez, by my arts impelled,
(To plunge Don Carlos in the last despair,
And to prevent all future molestation)
Finished the nuptials soon as he resolved them;
This conduct ripened all for me and ruin.
Scarce had the priest the holy rite performed,
When I, by sacred inspiration, forged
That letter, which I trusted to thy hand;
That letter, which, in glowing terms, conveys,
From happy Carlos to fair Leonora,

The most profound acknowledgments of heart,
For wond'rous transports which he never knew.
This is a good subservient artifice,
To aid the nobler workings of my brain.
Isa. I quickly dropt it in the bride's apartment,
As you commanded.
Zan. With a lucky hand,
For soon Alonzo found it; I observed him
From out my secret stand. He took it up;
But scarce was it unfolded to his sight,
When he, as if an arrow pierced his eye,
Started, and, trembling, dropt it on the ground.
Pale and aghast awhile my victim stood,
Disguised a sigh or two, and puffed them from him;
Then rubbed his brow, and took it up again.
At first he looked as if he meant to read it;
But, checked by rising fears, he crushed it thus,
And thrust it, like an adder, in his bosom.
Isa. But if he read it not, it cannot sting him,
At least not mortally.
Zan. At first I thought so;
But farther thought informs me otherwise,
And turns this disappointment to account.
He more shall credit it, because unseen,
(If 'tis unseen) as thou anon may'st find.
Isa. That would indeed commend my Zanga's skill.
Zan. This, Isabella, is Don Carlos' picture;
Take it, and so dispose of it, that, found,
It may raise up a witness of her love,
Under her pillow, in her cabinet,
Or elsewhere, as shall best promote our end.
Isa. I'll weigh it as its consequence requires,
Then do my utmost to deserve your smile.
[*Exit.*
Zan. Is that Alonzo prostrate on the ground?
—Now he starts up, like flame from sleeping embers,
And wild distraction glares from either eye!
If thus a slight surmise can work his soul,
How will the fulness of the tempest tear him?

Enter Don ALONZO.

Alon. And yet it cannot be—I am deceived—
I injure her! she wears the face of Heaven.
Zan. He doubts. [*Aside.*
Alon. I dare not look on this again.
If the first glance, which gave suspicion only,
Had such effect, so smote my heart and brain,
The certainty would dash me all in pieces.
It cannot—Ha! it must, it must be true.
[*Starts.*
Zan. Hold there, and we succeed. He has descried me;
And (for he thinks I love him) will unfold
His aching heart, and rest it on my counsel.
I'll seem to go, to make my stay more sure.
[*Aside.*
Alon. Hold, Zanga, turn.
Zan. My lord!
Alon. Shut close the doors,
That not a spirit find an entrance here.
Zan. My lord's obeyed.
Alon. I see that thou art frighted.
If thou dost love me, I shall fill thy heart
With scorpions' stings.
Zan. If I do love, my lord?
Alon. Come near me, let me rest upon thy bosom;
(What pillow like the bosom of a friend?)
For I am sick at heart.
Zan. Speak, sir, O speak,
And take me from the rack!
Alon. And is there need
Of words? Behold a wonder! See my tears!
Zan. I feel them too. Heaven grant my senses fail me!
I rather would lose them, than have this real.
Alon. Go, take a round through all things in thy thought,
And find that one—for there is only one
Which could extort my tears—find that, and tell
Thyself my misery, and spare me the pain.
Zan. Sorrow can think but ill——I am bewildered;
I know not where I am.
Alon. Think, think no more!
It ne'er can enter in an honest heart.
I'll tell thee, then——I cannot——yet I do,
By wanting force to give it utterance.
Zan. Speak, ease your heart; its throbs will burst your bosom!
Alon. I am most happy: mine is victory,
Mine the king's favour, mine the nation's shout,
And great men make their fortunes of my smiles.
O curse of curses! in the lap of blessing
To be most curst!—My Leonora's false!
Zan. Save me, my lord!
Alon. My Leonora's false!
[*Gives him the letter.*
Zan. Then Heaven has lost its image here on earth.
[*While* ZANGA *reads the letter, he trembles, and shews the utmost concern.*
Alon. Good-natured man! he makes my pains his own!
I durst not read it; but I read it now
In thy concern.
Zan. Did you not read it then?
Alon. Mine eye just touched it, and could bear no more.
Zan. Thus perish all that gives Alonzo pain!
[*Tears the letter.*
Alon. Why didst thou tear it?
Zan. Think of it no more.
'Twas your mistake; and groundless are your fears.
Alon. And didst thou tremble, then, for my mistake?
Or give the whole contents, or by the pangs
That feed upon my heart, thy life's in danger!
Zan. Is this Alonzo's language to his Zanga?
Draw forth your sword, and find the secret here.
For whose sake is it, think you, I conceal it?
Wherefore this rage? Because I seek your peace?
I have no interest in suppressing it,
But what good-natured tenderness for you
Obliges me to have. Not mine the heart

That will be rent in two; not mine the fame
That will be damned, though all the world should know it.
Alon. Then my worst fears are true, and life in past.
Zan. What has the rashness of my passion uttered?
I know not what; but rage is our destruction,
And all its words are wind——Yet sure, I think,
I nothing owned. But, grant I did confess,
What is a letter? Letters may be forged.
For Heaven's sweet sake, my lord, lift up your heart!
Some foe to your repose——
Alon. So Heaven look on me,
As I can't find the man I have offended.
Zan. Indeed! [*Aside*]——Our innocence is not our shield:
They take offence, who have not been offended;
They seek our ruin, too, who speak us fair,
And death is often ambushed in their smiles;
We know not whom we have to fear. 'Tis certain
A letter may be forged, and in a point
Of such a dreadful consequence as this,
One would rely on nought that might be false.
Think, have you any other cause to doubt her?
Away, you can find none. Resume your spirit;
All's well again.
Alon. O that it were!
Zan. It is;
For who would credit that, which, credited,
Makes hell superfluous by superior pains,
Without such proofs as cannot be withstood?
Has she not ever been to virtue trained?
Is not her fame as spotless as the sun,
Her sex's envy, and the boast of Spain?
Alon. O Zanga! it is that confounds me most,
That full in opposition to appearance——
Zan. No more, my lord, for you condemn yourself.
What is absurdity, but to believe
Against appearance!—You can't yet, I find,
Subdue your passion to your better sense;—
And, truth to tell, it does not much displease me.
'Tis fit your indiscretions should be checked
With some degree of pain.
Alon. What indiscretions?
Zan. Come, you must bear to hear your faults from me.
Had you not sent Don Carlos to the court
The night before the battle, that foul slave,
Who forged the senseless scroll which gives you pain,
Had wanted footing for his villany.
Alon. I sent him not.
Zan. Not send him! Ha! That strikes me.
I thought he came on message to the king.
Is there another cause could justify
His shunning danger, and the promised fight?
But I perhaps may think too rigidly;
So long an absence, and impatient love——
Alon. In my confusion that had quite escaped me.
By Heaven, my wounded soul does bleed afresh;
'Tis clear as day—for Carlos is so brave,
He lives not but on fame, he hunts for danger,
And is enamoured of the face of death.
How then could he decline the next day's battle
But for the transports—Oh, it must be so—
Inhuman, by the loss of his own honour,
To buy the ruin of his friend!
Zan. You wrong him;
He knew not of your love.
Alon. Ha!
Zan. That stings home. [*Aside.*
Alon. Indeed, he knew not of my treacherous love—
Proofs rise on proofs, and still the last the strongest.
The eternal law of things declares it true,
Which calls for judgment on distinguished guilt,
And loves to make our crime our punishment.
Love is my torture, love was first my crime;
For she was his, my friend's, and he (O horror!)
Confided all in me. O, sacred faith!
How dearly I abide thy violation!
Zan. Were, then, their loves far gone?
Alon. The father's will
There bore a total sway; and he, as soon
As news arrived that Carlos' fleet was seen
From off our coast, fired with the love of gold,
Determined, that the very sun which saw
Carlos' return, should see his daughter wed.
Zan. Indeed, my lord, then you must pardon me,
If I presume to mitigate the crime.
Consider, strong allurements soften guilt;
Long was his absence, ardent was his love,
At midnight his return, the next day destined
For his espousals—'twas a strong temptation.
Alon. Temptation!
Zan. 'Twas but gaining of one night.
Alon. One night!
Zan. That crime could ne'er return again.
Alon. Again! By Heaven thou dost insult thy lord.
Temptation! One night gained! O stings and death!
And am I then undone! Alas, my Zanga!
And dost thou own it too? Deny it still,
And rescue me one moment from distraction.
Zan. My lord, I hope the best.
Alon. False, foolish hope,
And insolent to me! Thou know'st it false;
It is as glaring as the noon-tide sun.
Devil! This morning, after three years coldness,
To rush at once into a passion for me!
'Twas time to feign, 'twas time to get another,
When her first fool was sated with her beauties.
Zan. What says my lord? Did Leonora then
Never disclose her passion for you?
Alon. Never.
Zan. Throughout the whole three years!
Alon. O never! never!
Why, Zanga, shouldst thou strive? 'Tis all in vain:
Though thy soul labours, it can find no reed
For hope to catch at. Ah! I am plunging down
Ten thousand fathoms in despair.
Zan. Hold, sir, I'll break your fall—wave every fear,

And be a man again—Had he enjoyed her,
Be most assured, he had resigned her to you
With less reluctance.
Alon. Ha! Resign her to me!—
Resign her!—Who resigned her?—Double death!
How could I doubt so long? My heart is broke.
First love her to distraction! then resign her!
Zan. But was it not with utmost agony?
Alon. Grant that, he still resigned her; that's enough.
Would he pluck out his eye to give it me?
Tear out his heart?—She was his heart no more—
Nor was it with reluctance he resigned her!
By Heaven, he asked, he courted me to wed.
I thought it strange; 'tis now no longer so.
Zan. Was it his request? Are you right sure of that?
I fear the letter was not all a tale.
Alon. A tale! There's proof equivalent to sight.
Zan. I should distrust my sight on this occasion.
Alon. And so should I: by Heaven I think I should.
What! Leonora, the divine, by whom
We guessed at angels! Oh! I'm all confusion.
Zan. You now are too much ruffled to think clearly.
Since bliss and horror, life and death hang on it,
Go to your chamber, there maturely weigh
Each circumstance; consider, above all,
That it is jealousy's peculiar nature
To swell small things to great; nay, out of nought
To conjure much, and then to lose its reason
Amid the hideous phantoms it has formed.
Alon. Had I ten thousand lives, I'd give them all
To be deceived. I fear 'tis doomsday with me.
And yet she seemed so pure, that I thought Heaven
Borrowed her form for virtue's self to wear,
To gain her lovers with the sons of men.
O Leonora! Leonora! [*Exit.*

Enter ISABELLA.

Zan. Thus far it works auspiciously. My patient
Thrives underneath my hand in misery.
He's gone to think; that is, to be distracted.
Isa. I overheard your conference, and saw you,
To my amazement, tear the letter.
Zan. There,
There, Isabella, I out-did myself;
For tearing it, I not secure it only
In its first force, but superadd a new;
For who can now the character examine,
To cause a doubt, much less detect the fraud?
And after tearing it, as loth to shew
The foul contents, if I should swear it now
A forgery, my lord would disbelieve me;
Nay, more, would disbelieve the more I swore.
But is the picture happily disposed of?
Isa. It is.
Zan. That's well—Ah! what is well! O pang to think!
O dire necessity! is this my province?
Whither, my soul! ah, whither art thou sunk
Beneath thy sphere? Ere while, far, far above
Such little arts, dissembling, falsehoods, frauds,
The trash of villany itself, which falls
To cowards, and poor wretches wanting bread.
Does this become a soldier? This become
Whom armies followed, and a people loved?
My martial glory withers at the thought.
But great my end; and since there are no other,
These means are just; they shine with borrowed light,
Illustrious from the purpose they pursue.
And greater sure my merit, who, to gain
A point sublime, can such a task sustain;
To wade through ways obscene my honour bend,
And shock my nature, to attain my end.
Late time shall wonder; that my joys will raise;
For wonder is involuntary praise. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter Don ALONZO *and* ZANGA.

Alon. Oh, what a pain to think! when every thought,
Perplexing thought, in intricacies runs,
And reason knits the inextricable toil,
In which herself is taken! I am lost,
Poor insect that I am; I am involved,
And buried in the web myself have wrought!
One argument is balanced by another,
And reason, reason meets in doubtful fight,
And proofs are countermined by equal proofs.
No more I'll bear this battle of the mind,
This inward anarchy; but find my wife,
And to her trembling heart presenting death,
Force all the secret from her.
Zan. O, forbear!
You totter on the very brink of ruin.
Alon. What dost thou mean?
Zan. That will discover all,
And kill my hopes. What can I think or do! [*Aside.*
Alon. What dost thou murmur?
Zan. Force the secret from her!
What's perjury to such a crime as this!
Will she confess it then? O, groundless hope!
But rest assured, she'll make this accusation;
Or false or true, your ruin with the king;
Such is her father's power.
Alon. No more, I care not;

Rather than groan beneath this load, I'll die.
Zan. But for what better will you change this load?
Grant you should know it, would not that be worse?
Alon. No; it would cure me of my mortal pangs:
By hatred and contempt I should despise her,
And all my love-bred agonies would vanish.
Zan. Ah! were I sure of that, my lord——
Alon. What then?
Zan. You should not hazard life to gain the secret.
Alon. What dost thou mean? Thou know'st I'm on the rack.
I'll not be played with; speak, if thou hast aught,
Or I this instant fly to Leonora.
Zan. That is, to death. My lord, I am not yet
Quite so far gone in guilt to suffer it,
Though gone too far, Heaven knows.—'Tis I am guilty;—
I have took pains, as you, I know, observed,
To hinder you from diving in the secret,
And turned aside your thoughts from the detection.
Alon. Thou dost confound me!
Zan. I confound myself,
And frankly own it, though to my shame I own it;
Nought but your life in danger could have torn
The secret out, and made me own my crime.
Alon. Speak quickly; Zanga, speak.
Zan. Not yet, dread sir:
First, I must be assured, that if you find
The fair one guilty, scorn, as you assured me,
Shall conquer love and rage, and heal your soul.
Alon. Oh! 'twill, by Heaven!
Zan. Alas! I fear it much,
And scarce can hope so far; but I of this
Exact your solemn oath, that you'll abstain
From all self-violence, and save my lord.
Alon. I trebly swear.
Zan. You'll bear it like a man?
Alon. A god.
Zan. Such have you been to me; these tears confess it,
And poured forth miracles of kindness on me:
And what amends is now within my power,
But to confess, expose myself to justice,
And, as a blessing, claim my punishment?
Know, then, Don Carlos——
Alon. Oh!
Zan. You cannot bear it.
Alon. Go on, I'll have it, though it blast mankind;
I'll have it all, and instantly. Go on.
Zan. Don Carlos did return at dead of night—

Enter LEONORA.

Leon. My lord Alonzo, you are absent from us,
And quite undo our joy.
Alon. I'll come, my love;
Be not our friends deserted by us both;
I'll follow you this moment.
Leon. My good lord,
I do observe severity of thought
Upon your brow. Aught hear you from the Moors?
Alon. No, my delight.
Leon. What then employed your mind?
Alon. Thou love, and only thou; so Heaven befriend me,
As other thought can find no entrance here.
Leon. How good in you, my lord, whom nations' cares
Solicit, and a world in arms obeys,
To drop one thought on me!
[*He shews the utmost impatience.*
Alon. Dost thou then prize it?
Leon. Do you then ask it?
Alon. Know then, to thy comfort,
Thou hast me all, my throbbing heart is full
With thee alone; I have thought of nothing else;
Nor shall, I from my soul believe, till death.
My life, our friends expect thee.
Leon. I obey. [*Exit.*
Alon. Is that the face of cursed hypocrisy?
If she is guilty, stars are made of darkness,
And beauty shall no more belong to Heaven!—
Don Carlos did return at dead of night——
Proceed, good Zanga; so thy tale began.
Zan. Don Carlos did return at dead of night;
That night by chance (ill chance for me) did I
Command the watch that guards the palace gate.
He told me he had letters for the king,
Dispatched from you.
Alon. The villain lied!
Zan. My lord,
I pray, forbear.——Transported at his sight,
After so long a bondage, and your friend,
(Who could suspect him of an artifice?)
No farther I enquired, but let him pass,
False to my trust, at least imprudent in it.
Our watch relieved, I went into the garden,
As is my custom when the night's serene,
And took a moon-light walk: when soon I heard
A rustling in an arbour that was near me.
I saw two lovers in each other's arms,
Embracing and embraced. Anon the man
Arose, and falling back some paces from her,
Gazed ardently awhile, then rushed at once,
And throwing all himself into her bosom,
There softly sighed—'Oh, night of ecstacy!
When shall we meet again?'—Don Carlos, then,
Led Leonora forth.
Alon. Oh, oh my heart!
[*He sinks into a chair.*
Zan. Groan on, and with the sound refresh my soul!
'Tis through his heart; his knees smite one another:
'Tis through his brain; his eye-balls roll in anguish. [*Aside.*
My lord, my lord, why do ye rack my soul?
Speak to me, let me know that you still live.
Do not you know me, sir? Pray, look upon me:
You think too deeply——I am your own Zanga,
So loved, so cherished, and so faithful to you.—

Why start you in such fury? Nay, my lord,
For Heaven's sake sheath your sword! What can this mean?
Fool that I was, to trust you with the secret,
And you unkind to break your word with me.
Oh, passion for a woman!——On the ground!
Where is your boasted courage? Where your scorn,
And prudent rage, that was to cure your grief,
And chase your love-bred agonies away?
Rise, sir, for honour's sake. Why should the Moors,
Why should the vanquished triumph?

Alon. Would to Heaven
That I were lower still! Oh, she was all!—
My fame, my friendship, and my love of arms,
All stoop to her; my blood was her possession.
Deep in the secret foldings of my heart
She lived with life, and far the dearer she.
But—and no more—set nature on a blaze,
Give her a fit of jealousy—away—
To think on't—is the torment of the damned,
And not to think on't is impossible.
How fair the cheek that first alarmed my soul!
How bright the eye that set it on a flame!
How soft the breast on which I laid my peace
For years to slumber, unawaked by care!
How fierce the transport! how sublime the bliss!
How deep, how black, the horror and despair!

Zan. You said you would bear it like a man.

Alon. I do.
Am I not most distracted?

Zan. Pray, be calm.

Alon. As hurricanes: be thou assured of that.

Zan. Is this the wise Alonzo?

Alon. Villain, no!
He died in the arbour—he was murdered there!
I am his dæmon though——My wife!—my wife!

Zan. Alas! he weeps.

Alon. Go, dig her grave!

Zan. My lord!

Alon. But that her blood's too hot, I would carouse it
Around my bridal board!

Zan. And I would pledge thee. [*Aside.*

Alon. But I may talk too fast. Pray, let me think,
And reason mildly. Wedded and undone
Before one night descends! Oh, hasty evil!
What friend to comfort me in my extreme!
Where's Carlos, why is Carlos absent from me?
Does he know what has happened?

Zan. My good lord!

Alon. O, depth of horror! He!—My bosom friend!

Zan. Alas, compose yourself, my lord.

Alon. To death.
Gaze on her with both eyes so ardently!
Give them the vultures, tear him all in pieces!

Zan. Most excellent! [*Aside.*

Alon. Hark! you can keep a secret.
In yonder arbour, bound with jasmine—
Who's that? What villain's that? Unhand her—Murder!—
Tear them asunder—Murder—How they grind
My heart betwixt them!—Oh, let go my heart!
Yet let it go———Embracing and embraced!
Oh, pestilence!—Who let him in?—A traitor.
[*Goes to stab* ZANGA, *he prevents him.*
Alas, my head turns round, and my limbs fail me!

Zan. My lord!

Alon. Oh, villain, villain, most accurst!
If thou didst know it, why didst let me wed?

Zan. Hear me, my lord, your anger will abate.
I knew it not:—I saw them in the garden;
But saw no more than you might well expect
To see in lovers destined for each other.
By Heaven I thought their meeting innocent.
Who could suspect fair Leonora's virtue,
Till after-proofs conspired to blacken it?
Sad proofs, which came too late, which broke not out,
(Eternal curses on Alvarez' haste!)
Till holy rites had made the wanton yours;
And then, I own, I laboured to conceal it,
In duty and compassion to your peace.

Alon. Live now, be damned hereafter—for I want thee.——
Oh, night of ecstacy!—Ha! was't not so?
I will enjoy this murder.——Let me think——
The jasmine bower—'tis secret and remote:
Go wait me there, and take thy dagger with thee.
[*Exit* ZANGA.
How the sweet sound still sings within my ear!
When shall we meet again?—To-night, in hell!

As he is going, enter LEONORA.

Ha! I'm surprised! I stagger at her charms!
Oh, angel-devil!——Shall I stab her now?
No—it shall be as I at first determined.
To kill her now, were half my vengeance lost.
Then must I now dissemble——if I can.

Leon. My lord, excuse me; see, a second time
I come in embassy from all your friends,
Whose joys are languid uninspired by you.

Alon. This moment, Leonora, I was coming
To thee, and all——but sure, or I mistake,
Or thou canst well inspire my friends with joy.

Leon. Why sighs my lord?

Alon. I sighed not, Leonora.

Leon. I thought you did; your sighs are mine, my lord,
And I shall feel them all.

Alon. Dost flatter me!

Leon. If my regards for you are flattery,
Full far indeed I stretched the compliment
In this day's solemn rite.

Alon. What rite?

Leon. You sport me.

Alon. Indeed I do, my heart is full of mirth.

Leon. And so is mine——I look on chearfulness,
As on the health of virtue.

Alon. Virtue!——Damn———

Leon. What says my lord!

Alon. Thou art exceeding fair.

Leon. Beauty alone is but of little worth;
But when the soul and body of a piece,

Both shine alike, then they obtain a price,
And are a fit reward for gallant actions,
Heaven's pay on earth for such great souls as your's;——
If fair and innocent, I am your due.
Alon. Innocent! [*Aside.*
Leon. How, my lord! I interrupt you.
Alon. No, my best life! I must not part with thee——
This hand is mine——Oh, what a hand is here!
So soft, souls sink into it, and are lost!
Leon. In tears, my lord?
Alon. What less can speak my joy?
I gaze, and I forget my own existence:
'Tis all a vision—my head swims in heaven!
Wherefore! oh, wherefore this expence of beauty?
And wherefore—Oh!——
Why, I could gaze upon thy looks for ever,
And drink in all my being from thine eyes:
And I could snatch a flaming thunderbolt,
And hurl destruction!——
Leon. How, my lord! what mean you?
Acquaint me with the secret of your heart,
Or cast me out for ever from your love!
Alon. Art thou concerned for me?
Leon. My lord, you fright me.
Is this the fondness of your nuptial hour?
I am ill-used, my lord, I must not bear it.
Why, when I woo your hand, is it denied me?
Your very eyes, why are they taught to shun me?
Nay, my good lord, I have a title here,
[*Taking his hand.*
And I will have it. Am not I your wife?
Have not I just authority to know
That heart which I have purchased with my own?
Lay it before me then; it is my due.
Unkind Alonzo! though I might demand it,
Behold I kneel! See, Leonora kneels,
And deigns to be a beggar for her own!
Tell me the secret, I conjure you tell me.
The bride foregoes the homage of her day,
Alvarez' daughter trembles in the dust.
Speak, then, I charge you speak, or I expire,
And load you with my death! My lord, my lord!
Alon. Ha, ha, ha!
[*He breaks from her, and she sinks upon the floor.*
Leon. Are these the joys which fondly I conceived?
And is it thus a wedded life begins?
What did I part with, when I gave my heart!
I knew not that all happiness went with it.
Why did I leave my tender father's wing,
And venture into love! The maid that loves,
Goes out to sea upon a shattered plank,
And puts her trust in miracles for safety.
Where shall I sigh? where pour out my complaints?
He that should hear, should succour, should redress,
He is the source of all.
Alon. Go to thy chamber;
I soon will follow; that which now disturbs thee
Shall be cleared up, and thou shalt not condemn me. [*Exit* LEON.
Oh, how like innocence she looks!—What, stab her!
And rush into her blood!——I never can!
In her guilt shines, and nature holds my hand.
How then? Why thus——No more; it is determined.

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. I fear his heart has failed him. She must die.
Can I not rouse the snake that's in his bosom,
To sting our human nature and effect it!
[*Aside.*
Alon. This vast and solid earth, that blazing sun,
Those skies through which it rolls, must all have end!
What then is man? the smallest part of nothing!
Day buries day, month month, and year the year—
Our life is but a chain of many deaths.
Can, then, death's self be feared? our life much rather.
Life is the desert, life the solitude,
Death joins us to the great majority:
'Tis to be borne to Plato's, and to Cæsars;
'Tis to be great for ever;
'Tis pleasure, 'tis ambition then to die.
Zan. I think, my lord, you talked of death.
Alon. I did.
Zan. I give you joy; then Leonora's dead.
Alon. No, Zanga, the greatest guilt is mine,
'Tis mine, who might have marked his midnight visit;
Who might have marked his tameness to resign her;
Who might have marked her sudden turn of love:
These, and a thousand tokens more; and yet
(For which the saints absolve my soul!) did wed.
Zan. Where does this tend?
Alon. To shed a woman's blood
Would stain my sword, and make my wars inglorious;
But just resentment to myself bears in it
A stamp of greatness above vulgar minds.
He, who, superior to the checks of nature,
Dares make his life the victim of his reason,
Does in some sort that reason deify,
And take a flight at heaven.
Zan. Alas, my lord,
'Tis not your reason, but her beauty finds
Those arguments, and throws you on your sword.
You cannot close an eye that is so bright;
You cannot strike a breast that is so soft,
That has ten thousand ecstacies in store
For Carlos——No, my lord, I mean for you.
Alon. Oh, through my heart and marrow! Prithee spare me;
Nor more upbraid the weakness of thy lord.
I own, I tried, I quarrelled with my heart,
And pushed it on, and bid it give her death;
But, oh, her eyes struck first, and murdered me!
Zan. I know not what to answer to my lord.

Men are but men; we did not make ourselves.
Farewell, then, my best lord, since you must die.
Oh, that I were to share your monument,
And in eternal darkness close these eyes
Against those scenes which I am doomed to suffer!
Alon. What dost thou mean?
Zan. And is it then unknown?
Oh, grief of heart to think that you should ask it!
Sure you distrust that ardent love I bear you,
Else could you doubt when you are laid in dust—
But it will cut my poor heart through and through,
To see those revel on your sacred tomb,
Who brought you thither by their lawless loves!
For there they'll revel, and exult to find
Him sleep so fast, who else might mar their joys.
Alon. Distraction!——But Don Carlos, well thou know'st,
Is sheathed in steel, and bent on other thoughts.
Zan. I'll work him to the murder of his friend. [*Aside.*
Yes, till the fever of his blood returns,
While her last kiss still glows upon his cheek.
But when he finds Alonzo is no more,
How will he rush like lightning to her arms!
There sigh, there languish, there pour out his soul;
But not in grief——sad obsequies to thee!——
But thou wilt be at peace, nor see, nor hear
The burning kiss, the sigh of ecstacy,
Their throbbing hearts that jostle one another:
Thank Heaven, these torments will be all my own.
Alon. I'll ease thee of that pain. Let Carlos die!
O'ertake him on the road, and see it done.
'Tis my command. [*Gives his signet.*
Zan. I dare not disobey.
Alon. My Zanga, now I have thy leave to die.
Zan. Ah, sir! think, think again. Are all men buried
In Carlos' grave! You know not womankind.
When once the throbbing of the heart has broke
The modest zone with which it first was tied,
Each man she meets will be a Carlos to her.
Alon. That thought has more of hell than had the former.
Another, and another, and another!
And each shall cast a smile upon my tomb!
I am convinced; I must not, will not die.
Zan. You cannot die; nor can you murder her.
What then remains? In nature no third way,
But to forget, and so to love again.
Alon. Oh!
Zan. If you forgive, the world will call you good;
If you forget, the world will call you wise;
If you receive her to your grace again,
The world will call you—very, very kind.
Alon. Zanga, I understand thee well. She dies!
Though my arm trembles at the stroke, she dies.
Zan. That's truly great. What think you 'twas set up
The Greek and Roman name in such a lustre,
But doing right in stern despite to nature,
Shutting their ears to all her little cries,
When great, august, and godlike justice called?
At Aulis, one poured out a daughter's life,
And gained more glory than by all his wars;
Another slew his sister in just rage;
A third, the theme of all succeeding times,
Gave to the cruel axe a darling son.
Nay, more, for justice some devote themselves,
As he at Carthage, an immortal name!
Yet there is one step left above them all,
Above their history, above their fable;
A wife, bride, mistress, unenjoyed——do that,
And tread upon the Greek and Roman glory.
Alon. 'Tis done!——Again new transports fire my brain:
I had forgot it, 'tis my bridal night.
Friend, give me joy, we must be gay together;
See that the festival be duly honoured.
And when with garlands the full bowl is crowned,
And music gives the elevating sound,
And golden carpets spread the sacred floor,
And a new day the blazing tapers pour;
Thou, Zanga, thou my solemn friends invite,
From the dark realms of everlasting night;
Call Vengeance, call the Furies, call Despair,
And Death, our chief invited guest, be there;
He, with pale hand, shall lead the bride, and spread
Eternal curtains round our nuptial bed. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter ALONZO.

Alon. Oh, pitiful! oh, terrible to sight!
Poor mangled shade! all covered o'er with wounds,
And so disguised with blood!——Who murdered thee?
Tell thy sad tale, and thou shalt be revenged.
Ha! Carlos?—Horror! Carlos!—Oh, away!
Go to the grave, or let me sink to mine.
I cannot bear the sight—What sight?—Where am I?
There's nothing here—If this was Fancy's work,
She draws a picture strongly.——

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. Ha! you're pale.
Alon. Is Carlos murdered?
Zan. I obeyed your order.
Six ruffians overtook him on the road;
He fought as he was wont, and four he slew,
Then sunk beneath an hundred wounds to death.

His last breath blest Alonzo, and desired
His bones might rest near yours.
Alon. Oh, Zanga! Zanga!
But I'll not think: for I must act, and thinking
Would ruin me for action. Oh, the medley
Of right and wrong! the chaos of my brain!
He should, and should not die—You should obey,
And not obey——It is a day of darkness,
Of contradictions, and of many deaths.
Where's Leonora, then? Quick, answer me:
I'm deep in horrors. I'll be deeper still.
I find thy artifice did take effect,
And she forgives my late deportment to her.
Zan. I told her, from your childhood you was wont,
On any great surprise, but chiefly then
When cause of sorrow bore it company,
To have your passions shake the seat of reason;
A momentary ill, which soon blew o'er.
Then did I tell her of Don Carlos' death,
(Wisely suppressing by what means he fell)
And laid the blame on that. At first she doubted;
But such the honest artifice I used,
And such her ardent wish it should be true,
That she, at length, was fully satisfied.
Alon. 'Twas well she was. In our late interview,
My passion so far threw me from my guard,
Methinks 'tis strange that, conscious of her guilt,
She saw not, through its thin disguise, my heart.
Zan. But what design you, sir, and how?
Alon. I'll tell thee.
Thus I've ordained it. In the jasmine bower,
The place which she dishonoured with her guilt,
There will I meet her; the appointment's made;
And calmly spread (for I can do it now)
The blackness of her crime before her sight,
And then, with all the cool solemnity
Of public justice, give her to the grave. [*Exit.*
Zan. Why, get thee gone! horror and night go with thee.
Sisters of Acheron, go hand in hand;
Go dance around the bower, and close them in;
And tell them that I sent you to salute them.
Profane the ground, and for th' ambrosial rose,
And breath of jasmine, let hemlock blacken,
And deadly nightshade poison all the air.
For the sweet nightingale may ravens croak,
Toads pant, and adders rustle through the leaves;
May serpents, winding up the trees, let fall
Their hissing necks upon them from above,
And mingle kisses—such as I could give them!
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Bower.*

LEONORA *sleeping.* *Enter* ALONZO.

Alon. Ye amaranths! ye roses, like the morn!
Sweet myrtles, and ye golden orange groves!
Why do you smile? Why do you look so fair?
Are ye not blasted as I enter in?
Yes, see how every flower lets fall its head!
How shudders every leaf without a wind!
How every green is as the ivy pale!
Did ever midnight ghosts assemble here?
Have these sweet echoes ever learned to groan?
Joy-giving, love-inspiring, holy bower!
Know, in thy fragrant bosom thou receivest
A——murderer! Oh, I shall stain thy lilies,
And horror will usurp the seat of bliss.
So Lucifer broke into paradise,
And soon damnation followed. [*He advances.*]
Ha! she sleeps———
The day's uncommon heat has overcome her.
Then take, my longing eyes, your last full gaze.
Oh, what a sight is here! how dreadful fair!
Who would not think that being innocent?
Where shall I strike! Who strikes her, strikes himself;
My own life-blood will issue at her wound.
Oh, my distracted heart!—Oh, cruel Heaven!
To give such charms as these, and then call man,
Mere man, to be your executioner.
Was it because it was too hard for you?
But see, she smiles! I never shall smile more.
It strongly tempts me to a parting kiss.
[*Going, he starts back.*
Ha! smile again. She dreams of him she loves.
Curse on her charms! I'll stab her through them all. [*As he is going to strike, she wakes.*
Leon. My lord, your stay was long, and yonder lull
Of falling waters tempted me to rest,
Dispirited with noon's excessive heat.
Alon. Ye powers, with what an eye she mends the day!
While they were closed, I should have given the blow. [*Aside.*
Oh, for a last embrace! and then for justice:
Thus, Heaven and I shall both be satisfied.
Leon. What says my lord!
Alon. Why this Alonzo says;
If love were endless, men were gods; 'tis that
Does counterbalance travel, danger, pain——
'Tis Heaven's expedient to make mortals bear
The light, and cheat them of the peaceful grave.
Leon. Alas, my lord! why talk you of the grave?
Your friend is dead: in friendship you sustain
A mighty loss; repair it with my love.
Alon. Thy love, thou piece of witchcraft! I would say,
Thou brightest angel! I could gaze for ever.
Where hadst thou this, enchantress, tell me where,
Which, with a touch, works miracles, boils up
My blood to tumults, and turns round my brain?
Even now thou swim'st before me. I shall lose thee———
No, I will make thee sure, and clasp thee all.
Who turned this slender waist with so much art,
And shut perfection in so small a ring?
Who spread that pure expanse of white above,
On which the dazzled sight can find no rest,
But, drunk with beauty, wanders up and down

For ever, and for ever finds new charms?
But oh, those eyes! those murderers! Oh whence,
Whence didst thou steal their burning orbs? From heaven?
Thou didst: and 'tis religion to adore them.
Leon. My best Alonzo, moderate your thoughts;
Extremes still fright me, though of love itself.
Alon. Extremes indeed! it hurried me away;
But I come home again—and now for justice—
And now for death.—It is impossible——
Sure such were made by Heaven guiltless to sin,
Or in their guilt to laugh at punishment. [*Aside.*
I leave her to just Heaven.
[*Drops the dagger, and goes off.*
Leon. Ha, a dagger!
What dost thou say, thou minister of death?
What dreadful tale dost tell me?——Let me think—

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. Death to my towering hopes! Oh, fall from high!
My close, long-laboured scheme at once is blasted.
That dagger, found, will cause her to enquire;
Enquiry will discover all; my hopes
Of vengeance perish; I myself am lost——
Curse on the coward's heart! wither his hand,
Which held the steel in vain! What can be done?—
Where can I fix?—That's something still—'twill breed
Fell rage and bitterness betwixt their souls,
Which may, perchance, grow up to greater evil:
If not, 'tis all I can—It shall be so. [*Aside.*
Leon. Oh, Zanga, I am sinking in my fears!
Alonzo dropped this dagger as he left me,
And left me in a strange disorder too.
What can this mean? Angels preserve his life!
Zan. Yours, madam, yours.
Leon. What, Zanga, dost thou say?
Zan. Carry you goodness, then, to such extremes,
So blinded to the faults of him you love,
That you perceive not he is jealous?
Leon. Heavens!
And yet a thousand things recur that swear it.
What villain could inspire him with that thought?
It is not of the growth of his own nature.
Zan. Some villain, who, hell knows; but he is jealous;
And 'tis most fit a heart so pure as yours
Do itself justice, and assert its honour,
And make him conscious of its stab to virtue.
Leon. Jealous! it sickens at my heart. Unkind,
Ungenerous, groundless, weak, and insolent!
Why, wherefore, and what shadow of occasion?
'Tis fascination, 'tis the wrath of Heaven
For the collected crimes of all his race.
Oh, how the great man lessens to my thought!
How could so mean a vice as jealousy,
Unnatural child of ignorance and guilt,
Which tears and feeds upon its parent's heart,
Live in a throng of such exalted virtues?
I scorn and hate, yet love him and adore.
I cannot, will not, dare not think it true,
Till from himself I know it. [*Exit.*
Zan. This succeeds
Just to my wish. Now she, with violence,
Upbraids him; he, well knowing she is guilty,
Rages no less; and if, on either side,
The waves run high, there still live hopes of ruin.

Enter ALONZO.

My lord——
Alon. Oh, Zanga, hold thy peace! I am no coward;
But Heaven itself did hold my hand; I felt it,
By the well-being of my soul, I did.
I'll think of vengeance at another season.
Zan. My lord, her guilt——
Alon. Perdition on thee, Moor,
For that one word! Ah, do not rouse that thought!
I have o'erwhelmed it as much as possible:
Away, then, let us talk of other things.
I tell thee, Moor, I love her to distraction.
If 'tis my shame, why, be it so—I love her;
Nor can I help it; 'tis imposed upon me
By some superior and resistless power.
I could not hurt her to be lord of earth;
It shocks my nature like a stroke from Heaven.
Angels defend her, as if innocent.
But see, my Leonora comes—Begone.
[*Exit* ZAN.

Enter LEONORA.

Oh, seen for ever, yet for ever new!
The conquered thou dost conquer o'er again,
Inflicting wound on wound.
Leon. Alas, my lord,
What need of this to me?
Alon. Ha! dost thou weep?
Leon. Have I no cause?
Alon. If love is thy concern,
Thou hast no cause: none ever loved like me.
But wherefore this? Is it to break my heart,
Which loses so much blood for every tear?
Leon. Is it so tender?
Alon. Is it not? Oh, Heaven!
Doubt of my love! Why, I am nothing else;
It quite absorbs my every other passion.
Oh, that this one embrace would last for ever!
Leon. Could this man ever mean to wrong my virtue?
Could this man e'er design upon my life?
Impossible! I throw away the thought. [*Aside.*
These tears declare how much I taste the joy
Of being folded in your arms and heart;
My universe does lie within that space.
This dagger bore false witness.
Alon. Ha, my dagger!
It rouses horrid images. Away,
Away with it, and let us talk of love,
Plunge ourselves deep into the sweet illusion,
And hide us there from every other thought.
Leon. It touches you.
Alon. Let's talk of love.
Leon. Of death!

Alon. As thou lov'st happiness——
Leon. Of murder!
Alon. Rash,
Rash woman! yet forbear.
Leon. Approve my wrongs!
Alon. Then must I fly, for thy sake and my own.
Leon. Nay, by my injuries, you first must hear me:
Stab me, then think it much to hear my groan!
Alon. Heaven strike me deaf!
Leon. It well may sting you home.
Alon. Alas, thou quite mistak'st my cause of pain!
Yet, yet dismiss me; I am all in flames.
Leon. Who has most cause, you or myself? What act
Of my whole life encouraged you to this?
Or of your own, what guilt has drawn it on you?
You find me kind, and think me kind to all;
The weak, ungenerous error of your sex.
What could inspire the thought? We oftenest judge
From our own hearts; and is yours then so frail,
It prompts you to conceive thus ill of me?
He that can stoop to harbour such a thought,
Deserves to find it true. [*Holding him.*
Alon. Oh, sex, sex, sex! [*Turning on her.*
The language of you all. Ill-fated woman!
Why hast thou forced me back into the gulf
Of agonies I had blocked up from thought?
I know the cause; thou saw'st me impotent
Ere while to hurt thee, therefore thou turn'st on me;
But, by the pangs I suffer, to thy woe:
For, since thou hast replunged me in my torture,
I will be satisfied.
Leon. Be satisfied!
Alon. Yes, thy own mouth shall witness it against thee.
I will be satisfied.
Leon. Of what?
Alon. Of what!
How dar'st thou ask that question? Woman, woman,
Weak and assured at once! thus 'tis for ever.
Who told thee that thy virtue was suspected?
Who told thee I designed upon thy life?
You found the dagger; but that could not speak:
Nor did I tell thee; who did tell thee, then?
Guilt, conscious guilt!
Leon. This to my face! Oh, Heaven!
Alon. This to thy very soul.
Leon. Thou art not in earnest?
Alon. Serious as death.
Leon. Then Heaven have mercy on thee!
Till now, I struggled not to think it true;
I shunned conviction, and would not believe it.
And dost thou force me? This shall not be borne;
Thou shalt repent this insult. [*Going.*
Alon. Madam, stay.
Your passion's wise: 'tis a disguise for guilt:
'Tis my turn now to fix you here awhile;
You and your thousand arts shall not escape me.
Leon. Arts!
Alon. Arts. Confess; for death is in my hand.
Leon. 'Tis in your words.
Alon. Confess, confess, confess!
Nor tear my veins with passion to compel thee.
Leon. I scorn to answer thee, presumptuous man!
Alon. Deny, then, and incur a fouler shame.
Where did I find this picture?
Leon. Ha, Don Carlos!
By my best hopes, more welcome than thy own.
Alon. I know it; but is vice so very rank,
That thou shouldst dare to dash it in my face?
Nature is sick of thee, abandoned woman!
Leon. Repent.
Alon. Is that for me?
Leon. Fall, ask my pardon.
Alon. Astonishment!
Leon. Dars't thou persist to think I am dishonest?
Alon. I know thee so.
Leon. This blow, then, to thy heart——
[*She stabs herself, he endeavours to prevent her.*
Alon. Hoa, Zanga! Isabella! hoa! she bleeds!
Descend, ye blessed angels, to assist her!
Leon. This is the only way that I would wound thee,
Though most unjust. Now think me guilty still.

Enter ISABELLA.

Alon. Bear her to instant help! The world to save her!
Leon. Unhappy man! well may'st thou gaze and tremble:
But fix thy terror and amazement right;
Not on my blood, but on thy own distraction.
What hast thou done? Whom censured?—Leonora!
When thou hast censured, thou wouldst save her life;
Oh, inconsistent! Should I live in shame,
Or stoop to any other means but this
To assert my virtue? No; she who disputes,
Admits it possible she might be guilty.
While aught but truth could be my inducement to it,
While it might look like an excuse to thee,
I scorned to vindicate my innocence;
But now, I let thy rashness know, the wound,
Which least I feel, is that my dagger made.
[ISABELLA *leads out* LEONORA.
Alon. Ha! was this woman guilty?—And if not—
How my thoughts darken that way! Grant, kind Heaven,
That she prove guilty, or my being end!
Is that my hope, then?—Sure the sacred dust
Of her that bore me trembles in its urn.
Is it in man the sore distress to bear,
When hope itself is blackened to despair;
When all the bliss I pant for, is to gain,
In hell, a refuge from severer pain? [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Enter ZANGA.

Zan. How stands the great account 'twixt me and vengeance?
Though much is paid, yet still it owes me much,
And I will not abate a single groan.—
Ha! that were well—but that were fatal too—
Why, be it so—Revenge, so truly great,
Would come too cheap, if bought with less than life.
Come, death, come, hell, then! 'tis resolved, 'tis done.

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. Ah, Zanga, see me tremble! Has not yet
Thy cruel heart its fill? Poor Leonora—
Zan. Welters in blood, and gasps for her last breath.
What then? We all must die.
Isa. Alonzo raves,
And, in the tempest of his grief, has thrice
Attempted on his life. At length disarmed,
He calls his friends that save him his worst foes,
And importunes the skies for swift perdition.
Thus in his storm of sorrow. After a pause,
He started up, and called aloud for Zanga,
For Zanga raved; and see, he seeks you here,
To learn the truth which most he dreads to know.
Zan. Begone.—Now, now, my soul, consummate all! [*Exit* ISAB.

Enter ALONZO.

Alon. Oh Zanga!
Zan. Do not tremble so; but speak.
Alon. I dare not. [*Falls on him.*
Zan. You will drown me with your tears.
Alon. Have I not cause?
Zan. As yet you have no cause.
Alon. Dost thou too rave?
Zan. Your anguish is to come:
You much have been abused.
Alon. Abused! by whom?
Zan. To know were little comfort.
Alon. Oh, 'twere much!
Zan. Indeed!
Alon. By Heaven! Oh, give him to my fury!
Zan. Born for your use, I live but to oblige you.
Know, then, 'twas—I.
Alon. Am I awake?
Zan. For ever.
Thy wife is guiltless—that's one transport to me;
And I, I let thee know it—that's another.
I urged Don Carlos to resign his mistress,
I forged the letter, I disposed the picture,
I hated, I despised, and I destroy!
Alon. Oh! [*Swoons.*
Zan. Why, this is well—why, this is blow for blow!
Where are you? Crown me, shadow me with laurels,
Ye spirits who delight in just revenge!
Let Europe and her pallid sons go weep;
Let Afric and her hundred thrones rejoice:
Oh, my dear countrymen, look down, and see
How I bestride your prostrate conqueror!
I tread on haughty Spain, and all her kings.
But this is mercy, this is my indulgence;
'Tis peace, 'tis refuge from my indignation.
I must awake him into horrors. Hoa!
Alonzo, hoa! the Moor is at the gate!
Awake, invincible, omnipotent!
Thou who dost all subdue!
Alon. Inhuman slave!
Zan. Fallen Christian, thou mistak'st my character.
Look on me. Who am I? I know, thou sayst,
The Moor, a slave, an abject, beaten slave:
(Eternal woes to him that made me so!)
But look again. Has six years cruel bondage
Extinguished majesty so far, that nought
Shines here to give an awe of one above thee?
When the great Moorish king, Abdallah, fell—
Fell by thy hand accurs'd—I fought fast by him,
His son, though, through his fondness, in disguise,
Less to expose me to the ambitious foe.——
Ha! does it wake thee?——O'er my father's corse,
I stood astride, till I had clove thy crest;
And then was made the captive of a squadron,
And sunk into thy servant——But oh! what,
What were my wages? Hear nor Heaven nor earth!
My wages were a blow! by Heaven, a blow!
And from a mortal hand!
Alon. Oh villain, villain!
Zan. All strife is vain. [*Shewing a dagger.*
Alon. Is thus my love returned?
Is this my recompence? Make friends of tigers!
Lay not your young, oh mothers! on the breast,
For fear they turn to serpents as they lie,
And pay you for their nourishment with death!—
Carlos is dead, and Leonora dying!
Both innocent! both murdered! both by me!—
That heavenly maid, who should have lived for ever,
At least have gently slept her soul away,
Whose life should have shut up, as evening flowers
At the departing sun—was murdered! murdered!
Oh shame! oh guilt! oh horror! oh remorse!
Oh punishment! Had Satan never fell,
Hell had been made for me.——Oh Leonora!
Zan. Must I despise thee, too, as well as hate thee?
Complain of grief—complain thou art a man.—
Priam from Fortune's lofty summit fell;
Great Alexander 'midst his conquests mourned;
Heroes and demi-gods have known their sorrows;
Cæsars have wept; and I have had my blow:
But 'tis revenged, and now my work is done.
Yet, ere I fall, be it one part of vengeance
To make thee to confess that I am just.—
Thou see'st a prince, whose father thou hast slain;
Whose native country thou hast laid in blood;

Whose sacred person (oh!) thou hast profaned,
Whose reign extinguished. What was left to me,
So highly born? No kingdom, but revenge!
No treasure, but thy tortures and thy groans.
If men should ask who brought thee to thy end,
Tell them, the Moor, and they will not despise thee.
If cold white mortals censure this great deed,
Warn them, they judge not of superior beings,
Souls made of fire, and children of the sun,
With whom revenge is virtue. Fare thee well—
Now, fully satisfied, I should take leave:
But one thing grieves me, since thy death is near,
I leave thee my example how to die.

As he is going to stab himself, ALONZO *rushes upon him to prevent him. In the mean time, enter Don* ALVAREZ, *attended. They disarm and seize* ZANGA. ALONZO *puts the dagger in his bosom.*

Alon. No, monster, thou shalt not escape by death.—
Oh, father!
Alv. Oh, Alonzo!—Isabella,
Touched with remorse to see her mistress' pangs,
Told all the dreadful tale.
Alon. What groan was that?
Zan. As I have been a vulture to thy heart,
So will I be a raven to thine ear,
As true as ever snuffed the scent of blood,
As ever flapped its heavy wing against
The window of the sick, and croaked despair.
Thy wife is dead.
[ALVAREZ *goes to the side of the stage, and returns.*
Alv. The dreadful news is true.
Alon. Prepare the rack; invent new torments for him.
Zan. This too is well. The fixed and noble mind
Turns all occurrents to its own advantage;
And I'll make vengeance of calamity.
Were I not thus reduced, thou wouldst not know,
That, thus reduced, I dare defy thee still.
Torture thou may'st, but thou shalt ne'er despise me.
The blood will follow where the knife is driven,
The flesh will quiver where the pincers tear,
And sighs and cries by nature grow on pain.
But these are foreign to the soul: not mine
The groans that issue, or the tears that fall;
They disobey me; on the rack I scorn thee,
As when my faulchion clove thy helm in battle.
Alv. Peace, villain!
Zan. While I live, old man, I'll speak:
And well I know thou dar'st not kill me yet;
For that would rob thy blood-hounds of their prey.
Alon. Who called Alonzo?
Alv. No one called, my son.
Alon. Again!——'Tis Carlos' voice, and I obey.—
Oh, how I laugh at all that this can do!
[*Shewing the dagger.*
The wounds that pained, the wounds that murdered me,
Were given before; I am already dead;
This only marks my body for the grave.
[*Stabs himself.*
Afric, thou art revenged.—Oh, Leonora! [*Dies.*
Zan. Good ruffians, give me leave; my blood is yours,
The wheel's prepared, and you shall have it all.
Let me but look one moment on the dead,
And pay yourselves with gazing on my pangs.
[*He goes to* ALONZO's *body.*
Is this Alonzo? Where's the haughty mein?
Is that the hand which smote me? Heavens, how pale!
And art thou dead? So is my enmity.
I war not with the dust. The great, the proud,
The conqueror of Afric was my foe;
A lion preys not upon carcases.
This was thy only method to subdue me.
Terror and doubt fall on me: all thy good
Now blazes, all thy guilt is in the grave.
Never had man such funeral applause:
If I lament thee, sure thy worth was great.
Oh, vengeance, I have followed thee too far,
And, to receive me, hell blows all her fires!
[*He is borne off.*
Alv. Dreadful effects of jealousy! a rage
In which the wise with caution will engage;
Reluctant long, and tardy to believe,
Where, swayed by nature, we ourselves deceive,
Where our own folly joins the villain's art,
And each man finds a Zanga in his heart.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

OUR author sent me, in an humble strain,
To beg you'd bless the offspring of his brain;
And I, your proxy, promis'd in your name,
The child should live, at least six days of fame.
I like the brat, but still his faults can find;
And, by the parent's leave, will speak my mind.
Gallants, pray, tell me, do you think 'twas well,
To let a willing maid lead apes in hell?
You nicer ladies, should you think it right,
To cat no suppers—on your wedding night?
Should English husbands dare to starve their wives,
Be sure they'd lead most comfortable lives!
But he loves mischief, and, with groundless fears,
Would fain set loving couples by the ears;
Would spoil the tender husbands of our nation,
By teaching them his vile, outlandish fashion.
But we've been taught, in our good-natur'd clime,

That jealousy, though just, is still a crime;
And will be still; for (not to blame the plot)
That same Alonzo was a stupid sot,
To kill a bride, a mistress unenjoyed—
'Twere some excuse, had the poor man been cloy'd:
To kill her on suspicion, ere he knew
Whether the heinous crime were false or true—
The priest said grace, she met him in the bower,
In hopes she might anticipate an hour—
Love was her errand, but the hot-brain'd Spaniard,
Instead of love—produc'd—a filthy poignard—
Had he been wise, at this their private meeting,
The proof o'th' pudding had been in the eating;
Madam had then been pleas'd, and Don contented,
And all this blood and murder been prevented.—
Britons, be wise, and from this sad example,
Ne'er break a bargain, but first take a sample.

THE

BROTHERS.

BY

YOUNG.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY MR. DODSLEY.

THE tragic muse, revolving many a page
Of Time's long records, drawn from every age,
Forms not her plans on low or trivial deeds,
But marks the striking! When some hero bleeds,
To save his country, then her powers inspire,
And souls congenial catch her patriot fire.
When bold oppression grinds a suffering land;
When the keen dagger gleams in Murder's hand;
When black conspiracy infects the throng;
Or fell Revenge sits brooding o'er his wrong;
Then walks she forth in terror; at her frown
Guilt shrinks appall'd, though seated on a throne.
But the rack'd soul, when dark suspicions rend,
When brothers hate, and sons with sons contend;
When clashing interests war eternal wage,
And love, the tenderest passion, turns to rage;
Then grief on every visage stands imprest,
And pity throbs in every feeling breast;
Hope, fear, and indignation rise by turns,
And the strong scene with various passion burns.
Such is our tale.—Nor blush if tears should flow:
They're virtue's tribute paid to human woe.
Such drops new lustre to bright eyes impart,
The silent witness of a tender heart:
Such drops adorn the noblest hero's cheek,
And paint his worth in strokes that more than speak:
Not he who cannot weep, but he who can,
Shews the great soul, and proves himself a man.
Yet do not idly grieve at others' pain,
Nor let the tears of nature fall in vain:
Watch the close crimes from whence their ills have grown,
And from their frailties learn to mend your own.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

PHILIP, *king of Macedon.*
PERSEUS, *his elder son.*
DEMETRIUS, *his younger son.*
PERICLES, *the friend of Perseus.*
ANTIGONUS, *a minister of state.*
DYMAS, *the king's favourite.*
POSTHUMIUS, CURTIUS, } *Roman ambassadors.*

WOMEN.

ERIXENE, *the Thracian princess.*
Her attendant.

SCENE,—*Macedon.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter CURTIUS *and* POSTHUMIUS.

Cur. There's something of magnificence about us,
I have not seen at Rome. But you can tell me.
[*Gazes round.*

Post. True: hither sent on former embassies,
I know this splendid court of Macedon,
And haughty Philip, well.

Cur. His pride presumes
To treat us here like subjects more than Romans,
More than ambassadors, who in our bosoms
Bear peace and war, and throw him which we please,
As Jove his storm, or sunshine, on his creatures.

Post. This Philip only, since Rome's glory rose,
Preserves its grandeur to the name of king;
Like a bold star, that shews its fires by day.
The Greek, who won the world, was sent before him,
As the grey dawn before the blaze of noon:
Philip had ne'er been conquered, but by Rome;
And what can fame say more of mortal man?

Cur. I know his public character.

Post. It pains me
To turn my thought on his domestic state.
There Philip is no god; but pours his heart,
In ceaseless groans, o'er his contending sons;
And pays the secret tax of mighty men
To their mortality.

Cur. But whence this strife,
Which thus afflicts him?

Post. From this Philip's bed
Two Alexanders spring.

Cur. And but one world?
'Twill never do.

Post. They both are bright; but one,
Benignly bright, as stars to mariners;
And one a comet, with malignant blaze,
Denouncing ruin.

Cur. You mean Perseus.

Post. True.
The younger son, Demetrius, you well know,
Was bred at Rome, our hostage from his father.
Soon after, he was sent ambassador,
When Philip feared the thunder of our arms.
Rome's manners won him, and his manners Rome;
Who granted peace, declaring she forgave
To his high worth the conduct of his father.
This gave him all the hearts of Macedon;
Which, joined to his high patronage from Rome,
Inflames his jealous brother.

Cur. Glows there not
A second brand of enmity?

Post. O yes;
The fair Erixene,

Cur. I've partly heard
Her smothered story.

Post. Smothered by the king;
And wisely too: but thou shalt hear it all.
Not seas of adamant, not mountains whelmed
On guilty secrets, can exclude the day.
Long burnt a fixed hereditary hate
Between the crowns of Macedon and Thrace;
The sword by both too much indulged in blood.
Philip, at length, prevailed; he took, by night,
The town and palace of his deadly foe;
Rushed through the flames, which he had kindled round,
And slew him, bold in vain; nor rested there,
But, with unkingly cruelty, destroyed
Two little sons within their mother's arms;
Thus meaning to tread out those sparks of war,
Which might one day flame up to strong revenge.
The queen, through grief, on her dead sons expired.
One child alone survived; a female infant,
Amidst these horrors, in the cradle smiled.

Cur. What of that infant?

Post. Stung with sharp remorse,
The victor took, and gave her to his queen.
The child was bred, and honoured as her own;
She grew, she bloomed; and now her eyes repay
Her brothers' wounds, on Philip's rival sons.

Cur. Is, then, Erixene that Thracian child?
How just the gods! from out that ruined house
He took a brand, to set his own on fire.

Post. To give thee, friend, the whole in miniature,
This is the picture of great Philip's court:
The proud, but melancholy king, on high
Majestic sits, like Jove enthroned in darkness;
His sons are as the thunder in his hand;
And the fair Thracian princess is a star,
That sparkles by, and gilds the solemn scene.
[*Shouts heard.*
'Tis their great day, supreme of all their year,
The famed lustration of their martial powers;
Thence, for our audience, chosen by the king.
If he provokes a war, his empire shakes,
And all her lofty glories nod to ruin.

Cur. Who comes?

Post. O, that's the jealous elder brother;
Irregular in manners as in form.
Observe the fire, high birth and empire kindle!

Cur. He holds his conference with much emotion.

Post. The brothers both can talk, and, in their turn,
Have borne away the prize of eloquence
At Athens. Shun his walk: our own debate
Is now at hand. We'll seek his lion sire,
Who dares to frown on us, his conquerors;
And carries so much monarch on his brow,
As if he'd fright us with the wounds we gave him.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter PERSEUS *and* PERICLES.

Per. 'Tis empire! empire! empire! let that word
Make sacred all I do, or can attempt!
Had I been born a slave, I should affect it;
My nature's fiery, and, of course, aspires.
Who gives an empire, by the gift defeats
All end of giving; and procures contempt
Instead of gratitude. An empire lost,
Destroyed, would less confound me, than resigned.
Peri. But are you sure Demetrius will attempt?
Per. Why does Rome court him? For his virtues? No.
To fire him to dominion; to blow up
A cival war; then to support him in it:
He gains the name of king, and Rome the power.
Peri. This is, indeed, the common art of Rome.
Per. That source of justice through the wondring world!
His youth and valour second Rome's designs:
The first impels him to presumptuous hope;
The last supports him in it. Then his person!
Thy hand, O nature, has made bold with mine.
Yet more! what words distil from his red lip,
To gull the multitude! and they make kings.
Ten thousand fools, knaves, cowards, lumped together,
Become all wise, all righteous, and almighty!
Nor is this all: the foolish Thracian maid
Prefers the boy to me!
Peri. And does that pain you?
Per. O Pericles, to death! It is most true,
Through hate to him, and not through love for her,
I paid my first addresses; but became
The fool I feigned: my sighs are now sincere.
It smarts; it burns: O that 'twere fiction still!
By Heaven, she seems more beauteous than dominion!
Peri. Dominion and the princess both are lost,
Unless you gain the king.
Per. But how to gain him?
Old men love novelties; the last arrived
Still pleases best; the youngest steals their smiles.
Peri. Dymas alone can work him to his pleasure;
First in esteem, and keeper of his heart.
Per. To Dymas thou, and win him to thy will.
In the mean time, I'll seek my double rival;
Curb his presumption, and erect myself
In all the dignity of birth before him.
Whate'er can stir the blood, or sway the mind,
Is now at stake; and double is the loss,
When an inferior bears away the prize.
Peri. Your brother, dressed for the solemnity!
Per. To Dymas fly! gain him, and think on this;
A prince indebted is a fortune made.
[*Exit* PERICLES.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. How, brother! unattired? Have you forgot
What pomps are due to this illustrious day?
Per. I am no gew-gaw for the throng to gaze at:
Some are designed by nature but for shew;
The tinsel and the feather of mankind.
Dem. Brother, of that no more: for shame, gird on
Your glittering arms, and look like any Roman.
Per. No, brother, let the Romans look like me,
If they're ambitious. But, I prithee, stand;
Let me gaze on thee:—No inglorious figure!
More Romano, as it ought to be.
But what is this, that dazzles my weak sight?
There's sunshine in thy beaver.
Dem. 'Tis that helmet,
Which Alexander wore at Granicus.
Per. When he subdued the world? Ha! is't not so?
What world hast thou subdued? O yes, the fair!
Think'st thou there could, in Macedon, be found
No brow might suit that golden blaze but thine?
Dem. I wore it but to grace this sacred day:
Jar not for trifles.
Per. Nothing is a trifle,
That argues the presumption of the soul.
Dem. 'Tis they presume, who know not to deserve.
Per. Or who, deserving, scorn superior merit.
Dem. Who combats with a brother, wounds himself:
Wave private wrath, and rush upon the foes
Of Macedon.
Per. No; I would not wound
Demetrius' friends.
Dem. Demetrius' friends!
Per. The Romans!
You copy Hannibal, our great ally:
Say, at what altar was you sworn their foe?
Peace-making brother! Wherefore bring you peace,
But to prevent my glory from the field?
The peace, you bring, was meant as war to me.
Dem. Perseus, be bold when danger's all your own:
War now, were war with Philip more than Rome.
Per. Come, you love peace; that fair cheek hates a scar.
You, that admire the Romans, break the bridge
With Cocles, or with Curtius leap the gulph;
And league not with the vices of our foes.
Dem. What vices?
Per. With their women and their wits;
Your idol Lælius, Lælius the polite.
I hear, sir, you take wing, and mount in metre;
Terence has owned your aid, your comrade Terence.
God-like ambition! Terence there, the slave!
Dem. At Athens bred, and to the arts a foe?
Per. At Athens bred, and borrow arts from Rome?
Dem. Brother, I've done: let our contention cease:
Our mother shudders at it in her grave!
And how has Philip mourned? a dreadful foe,
And awful king; but, oh! the tenderest parent,

That ever wept, in fondness, o'er a child.
Per. Why, ay, go tell your father; fondly throw
Your arms around him; stroke him to your purpose,
As you are wont: I boast not so much worth;
I am no picture, by the doating eye
To be surveyed, and hung about his neck;
I fight his battles; that's all I can do.
But, if you boast a piety sincere,
One way you may secure your father's peace;
And one alone—resign Erixene.
Dem. You flatter me, to think her in my power.
We run our fates together: you deserve,
And she can judge: proceed we, then, like friends;
And he, who gains her heart, and gains it fairly,
Let him enjoy his generous rival's too.
Per. Smooth-speaking, insincere, insulting boy!
Is, then, my crown usurped but half thy crime?
Desist; or by the gods, that smile on blood,
Not thy fine form, nor yet thy boasted peace,
Nor patronizing Rome, nor Philip's tears,
Nor Alexander's helmet; no, nor more,
His radiant form, should it alight in thunder,
And spread its new divinity between us,
Should save a brother from a brother's fury!
[*Exit.*
Dem. How's this? the waves ne'er ran thus high before;
Resign thee! yes, Erixene, with life!
Thou, in whose eyes, so modest, and so bright,
Love ever wakes, and keeps a vestal fire;
Ne'er shall I wean my fond, fond heart from thee!
But Perseus warns me to rouse all my powers.
As yet I float in dark uncertainty;
For though she smiles, I sound not her designs:
I'll fly, fall, tremble, weep upon her feet,
And learn (O all ye gods!) my final doom!—
My father! ha! and on his brow deep thought
And pale concern! Kind Heaven assuage his sorrows,
Which strike a damp through all my flames of love! [*Exit.*

Enter King and ANTIGONUS.

King. Kings of their envy cheat a foolish world:
Fate gives us all in spite, that we alone
Might have the pain of knowing all is nothing!
The seeming means of bliss but heighten woe,
When impotent to make their promise good:
Hence, kings, at least, bid fairest to be wretched.
Ant. True, sir; 'tis empty, or tormenting, all;
The days of life are sisters; all alike,
None just the same; which serves to fool us on
Through blasted hopes with change of fallacy:
While joy is like to-morrow, still to come;
Nor ends the fruitless chase but in the grave!
King. Ay, there, Antigonus, this pain will cease,
Which meets me at my banquet, haunts my pillow,
Nor by the din of arms is frighted from me.
Conscience, what art thou? thou tremendous power!
Who dost inhabit us without our leave;
And art, within ourselves, another self,
A master self, that loves to domineer,
And treat the monarch frankly as the slave,
How dost thou light a torch to distant deeds!
Make the past present, and the future frown!
How, ever and anon, awake the soul,
As with a peal of thunder, to strange horrors,
In this long restless dream, which idiots hug,
Nay, wise men flatter with the name of life?
Ant. You think too much.
King. I do not think at all:
The gods impose, the gods inflict, my thoughts,
And paint my dreams with images of dread!
Last night, in sleep, I saw the Thracian queen
And her two murdered sons. She frowned upon me,
And pointed at their wounds! How throbbed my heart!
How shook my couch! and when the morning came,
The formidable picture still subsisted,
And slowly vanished from my waking eye!
I fear some heavy vengeance hangs in air,
And conscious deities infuse these thoughts,
To warn my soul of her approaching doom.
The gods are rigid, when they weigh such deeds
As speak a ruthless heart; they measure blood
By drops, and bate not one in the repay.
Could infants hurt me? 'Twas not like a king!
Ant. My lord, I do confess the gods are with us;
Stand at our side in every act of life,
And on our pillow watch each secret thought;
Nay, see it in its embryo, yet unborn.
But their wrath ceases on remorse for guilt:
And well I know your sorrows touch your sons;
Nor is it possible but time must quench
Their flaming spirits in a father's tears.
King. Vain comfort! I this moment overheard
My jarring sons, with fury, shake my walls.
Ah! why my curse from those, who ought to bless me!
The queen of Thrace can answer that sad question.
She had two sons; but two: and so have I.
Misfortune stands with her bow ever bent
Over the world; and he, who wounds another,
Directs the goddess, by that part he wounds,
Where to strike deep her arrows in himself.
Ant. I own, I think it time your sons receive
A father's awful counsel; or, while here,
Now weary nature calls for kind repose,
Your curtains will be shaken with their broils:
And, when you die, sons' blood may stain your tomb!
But other cares demand you now,—the Romans.
King. O change of pain! the Romans? Perish Rome!
Thrice happy they, who sleep in humble life,
Beneath the storm ambition blows. 'Tis meet
The great should have the fame of happiness,

The consolation of a little envy;
'Tis all their pay for those superior cares,
Those pangs of heart their vassals ne'er can feel.
Where are these strangers? First I'll hear their tale;
Then talk in private with my sons.
Ant. But how
Intends my lord to make his peace with Rome?
King. Rome calls me fiery: let them find me so.
Ant. O, sir, forbear! Too late you felt Rome's power.
King. Yes, and that reason stings me more than ever,
To curse, and hate, and hazard all against her.
Ant. Hate her too much to give her battle now;
Nor to your god-like valour owe your ruin.
Greece, Thessaly, Illyrium, Rome has seized;
Your treasures wasted, and your phalanx thinned;
Should she proceed, and strike at Macedon,
What would be left of empire?
King. Philip: all.
I'll take my throne.—Send in these foreigners.
[*The Scene draws, and discovers a magnificent Throne,* PERSEUS, DEMETRIUS, *Courtiers, &c. attending.* POSTHUMIUS *and* CURTIUS, *the Roman ambassadors, enter. Trumpets sound. The king ascends the throne.*]
Post. Philip of Macedon, to those complaints
Our friends groan out, and you have heard at large,
Rome now expects an answer. She sits judge,
And will have right on earth.
King. Expects an answer!
I so shall answer as becomes a king.
Post. Or more, sir; as becomes a friend of Rome.
King. Or Alexander's heir, to rise still higher.
But to the purpose. Thus a king to those,
That would make kings, and puff them out at pleasure:
Has Philip done amiss? 'Twas you provoked him.
My cities, which deserted in my wars,
I thought it meet to punish: you denied me.
When I had shook the walls of Marena,
You plucked me thence, and took the taken town.
Then you sent word I should retire from Greece,
A conquest at my door, by nature mine—
And said, 'here end thy realm;' as ye were gods!
And gods ye shall be, ere Rome humbles me.
All this is done; yet Philip is your friend!
If this buys friendship, where can ye find foes?
In what regard will stern Rome look upon me?
If as a friend, too precious let her hold
Her own esteem, to cast a stain on mine:
If as an enemy, let her proceed,
And do as she has done; she needs no more.
Post. The Romans do no wrong, yet still are men;
And if to-day an error thwarts their purpose,
To-morrow sets it right. If Philip loves
Dominion, and the pride, that waits on kings,
(Of which, perhaps, his words too strongly savour)
Humility to Rome will lead him to it.
She can give more than common kings can govern.
King. Than common kings? Ambassador! remember
Cannæ—where first my sword was flushed with blood.
Dem. My lord, forbear. [*Aside to the king.*
King. And Hannibal still lives.
Post. Because he fled at Capua.
King. There, indeed,
I was not with him.
Post. Therefore he fled alone.—
Since thus you treat us, hear another charge.
Why here detain you, prisoner of your power,
His daughter, who was once Rome's good ally,
The king of Thrace! Why is she not restored?
For our next meeting you'll provide an answer;
What now has past, for his sake we forgive.
[*Pointing to* DEMETRIUS.
But mark this well: there lies some little distance,
Philip, between a Roman and a king.
[*Exeunt Romans.*
King. How say'st, unsceptered boaster? This to me!
With Hannibal I cleft yon Alpine rocks,
With Hannibal choaked Thrasymene with slaughter:
But, O the night of Cannæ's raging field!
When half the Roman senate lay in blood
Without our tent, and groaned as we caroused!
Immortal gods! for such another hour!
Then throw my carcase to the dogs of Rome.
Ant. Sir, you forget your sons.
King. Let all withdraw.
[*Exeunt all but the king and his sons.*
Two passions only take up all my soul;
Hatred to Rome, and tenderness for them.
Draw near, my sons, and listen to my age.
By what has past, you see the state of things;
Foreign alliance must a king secure,
And insolence sustain to serve his power.
And if alliances with Rome are needful,
Much more among ourselves. If I must bear,
Unmoved, an insult from a stranger's brow,
Shall not a brother bear a brother's look
Without impatience? Whither all this tends,
I'm sorry that your conscious hearts can tell you:
Is it not most severe? Two sons alone
Have crowned my bed; and they two are not brothers.
Look here, and, from my kind regards to you,
Copy such looks as you should bear each other.
Why do I sigh? Do you not know, my sons?
And if you do—O let me sigh no more!
Let these white hairs put in a claim to peace!
Per. Henceforth, my sole contention with my brother
Is this; which best obeys our father's will.
Dem. Father, if simple nature ever speaks
In her own language, scorning useless words,
You see her now; she swells into my eyes.
I take thee to my heart: I fold thee in it.
[*Embracing* PERSEUS.
Our father bids; and that we drank one milk,

Is now the smallest motive of my love.
King. Antigonus, the joy their mother felt,
When they were born, was faint to what I feel.
Dem. See, brother, if he does not weep! His love
Runs o'er in venerable tears. I'm rude:
But nature will prevail—My king! My father!
Per. Now cannot I let fall a single tear.
[*Aside.*
King. See! the good man has caught it too.
Ant. Such tears,
And such alone, be shed in Macedonia!
King. Be not thou, Perseus, jealous of thy brother;
Nor thou, Demetrius, prone to give him cause;
Nor either think of empire, till I'm dead.
You need not; you reign now; my heart is your's;
Sheath your resentments in your father's peace;
Come to my bosom both, and swear it there.
[*Embracing his sons.*
Ant. Look down, ye gods, and change me, if you can,
This sight for one more lovely! What so sweet,
So beautiful, on earth, and, ah! so rare,
As kindred love, and family repose?
This, this alliance, Rome, will quite undo thee.
See this, proud Eastern monarchs, and look pale!
Armies are routed, realms o'er-run by this.
King. Or if leagued worlds superior forces bring,
I'd rather die a father than a king.
Fathers alone a father's heart can know;
What secret tides of still enjoyment flow,
When brothers love; but if their hate succeeds,
They wage the war; but 'tis the father bleeds.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter PERSEUS.

Per. Why loiters my ambassador to Dymas?
His greatness will not, sure, presume to scorn
A friendship, offered from an heir of empire!
But Pericles returns.

Enter PERICLES.

Is Dymas our's?
Peri. He's cautious, sir; he's subtle; he's a courtier.
Dymas is now for you, now for your brother;
For both, and neither: he's a summer-insect,
And loves the sunshine: on his gilded wings,
While the scales waver, he'll fly doubtful round you,
And sing his flatteries to both alike:
The scales once fixed, he'll settle on the winner,
And swear his prayers drew down the victory—
But what success had you, sir, with your brother?
Per. All, all my hopes are at the point of death!
The boy triumphant keeps his hold in love:
He's ever warbling nonsense in her ear
With all the intoxication of success.
Darkness incloses me; nor see I light
From any quarter dawn, but from his death.
Peri. Why start at his death, who resolves on your's?
Per. Resolves on mine!
Peri. Have you not marked the princess?
You have: with what a beam of majesty
Her eye strikes sacred awe! It speaks her mind,
Exalted as it is. Whom loves she then?
Demetrius? No; Rome's darling; who, no doubt,
Dares court her with your empire. And shall Perseus
Survive that loss?—Thus he resolves your death.
Per. Most true. What crime then to strike first? But how?
Or when? or where? O Pericles! assist me.
Peri. 'Tis dangerous.
Per. The fitter for me.
Peri. Wait an occasion, that befriends your wishes.
Per. Go, fool, and teach a cataract to creep!
Can thirst of empire, vengeance, beauty, wait?
Peri. In the mean time, accept a stratagem,
That must secure your empire, or your love.
Your brother's Roman friendships gall no less
The king than you: he dreads their consequence.
Dymas hates Rome; and Dymas has a daughter.
How can the king so powerfully fix
Demetrius' faith, as by his marriage there?
For Dymas thus, Rome's sworn, eternal foe,
Becomes a spy upon his private life,
And surety for his conduct.
Per. True—but thus
Our art defeats itself. My brother gains
The favourite, and so strengthens in his treason.
Peri. Think you he will wed her? No, the princess' eye
Makes no such short-lived conquest. He'll refuse,
And thus effect what I have strove in vain:
Yes, he'll refuse; and Dymas, in his wrath,
Will list for us and vengeance. Then the king
Will, doubtless, much resent his son's refusal;
And thus we kindle the whole court against him.
Per. My precious friend, I thank thee. I take wing
On ardent hope: I think it cannot fail.
Go, make thy court to Dymas with this scheme:
Begone—Erixene! I'll feed her pride
[*Looking out.*
Once more, but not expend my breath in vain.
This meeting stamps unalterable fate;
I will wed her, or vengeance——

Enter ERIXENE *and* DELIA.

O, Erixene!
O, princess, colder than your Thracian snows!
See Perseus, who ne'er stooped but to the gods,
Prostrate before you. Fame and empire sue.
Why have I conquered? Because you are fair;
What's empire? but a title to adore you.
Why do I number in my lineage high
Heroes and gods? That you, scarce less divine,
Without a blush may listen to my vows.
My ancestor subdued the world. I dare
Beyond his pride, and grasp at more, in you.
Obdurate maid! or turn, or I expire.

Erix. If love, my lord, is choice, who loves in vain
Should blame himself alone; and if 'tis fate,
'Tis fate in all: why then your blame on me?
My crown's precarious, through the chance of war;
But sure my heart's my own. Each villager
Is queen of her affections, and can vent
Her arbitrary sighs, where'er she pleases.
Shall then the daughter of a race of kings——

Per. Madam, you justly blame the chance of war;
The gods have been unkind: I am not so.
No! Perseus comes to counterbalance fate.
Thrace ne'er was conquered——if you smile on me.
Silent! obdurate still! as cold as death!
But 'tis Demetrius.——

Erix. Prince, I take your meaning.
But, if you truly think his worth prevails,
How strange is your request!

Per. No, madam, no;
Though love has hurt my mind, I still can judge
What springs controul the passions of the great.
Ambition is first minister of state;
Love's but a second in the cabinet:
Nor can he feather there his unfledged shaft,
But from ambition's wing: but you conceive
More sanguine hopes from him, whom Rome supports,
Than me. You view Demetrius on my throne;
And thence he shines indeed! his charms from thence
Transpierce your soul, enamoured of dominion.

Erix. Why now you shew me your profound esteem!
Demetrius' guilt alone has charms for me;
'Tis not the prince, but traitor, wins my love.
Such insults are not brooked by royal minds,
Howe'er their fortunes ebb; and though I mourn,
An orphan, and a captive, gods there are——
Fear then an orphan's and a captive's wrong,

Per. Your cruel treatment of my passion——
But I'll not talk. This, madam; only this——
Think not the cause, the cursed cause of all,
Shall laugh secure, and triumph in my pangs.
No; by the torments of an heart on fire,
He gluts my vengeance, who defrauds my love!
[*Exit.*

Erix. What have I done! In what a whirlwind rage
Has snatched him hence on ill! I frown on Perseus,
And kill Demetrius.

Del. Madam, see the prince.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Erix. Ah, prince! the tempest, which so long has lowered,
Is now full ripe, and bursting o'er your head.
This moment Perseus' malice flamed before me;
Victorious rage broke through his wonted guard,
And menaced loud your ruin. Fly, O fly
This instant!

Dem. To what refuge?

Erix. Rome extends
Her longing arms to clasp you for her own.

Dem. Madam, 'tis prudent, I confess it is:
But is it loving as true lovers ought,
To be so very prudent in our love?
I boast not so much wisdom: I prefer
Death at your feet before the world without you.

Erix. In danger thus extreme——

Dem. Oh! most beloved!
Loved you like me, like me you would discern
That I but execute my brother's purpose
By such a flight. At that his clamour, rage,
And menace aim: to chase a rival hence,
And keep the field alone. Oh! shall I leave him
To gaze whole days; to learn to read your eye;
To study your delights, to chide the wind's
Too rude approach; to bid the ground be smooth;
To follow, like your shadow, where you go;
Tread in your steps; perhaps——to touch your hand!
O death! to minister in little things;
From half a glance to prophecy your will,
And do it, ere well formed in your own mind!
Gods! Gods! While worlds divide me from my princess,
That, should she call, Demetrius might grow old
Ere he could reach her feet!

Erix. If Perseus' love
Pains you, it pains me more. Is your heart grieved?
Mine is tormented; but since Philip's self
Is love's great advocate, a flat refusal
But blows their rage, and hastens your destruction.
Had I not that to fear, were you secure,
I'd ease my bosom of its full disdain,
And dash this bold presumer on his birth.
But, see! the grand procession.

Dem. We must join it.

Enter the King, PERSEUS, *Romans,* ANTIGONUS, *&c.*

King. Let the procession halt! and here be paid,
Before yon flaming altar, thanks to Heaven,
That brings us safe to this auspicious day!
The great lustration of our martial powers,
Which from its distant birth to present time
Unfolds the glories of this ancient empire,
And throngs the pride of ages in an hour.

Post. What figure's that, O Philip, which precedes? [*Pointing.*

King. The founder of our empire, furious son

Of great Alcides. We are allied to Heaven;
And you, I think, call Romulus a god.
That, Philip, second of our name; and here—
O bend with awe to him, whose red right hand
Hurled proud Darius like a star from Heaven,
With lesser lights around him, flaming down,
And bid the laurelled sons of Macedonia
Drink their own Ganges!
Per. Give him his helmet, brother.
[*Aside to* DEM.
King. You lead the troops that join in mock encounter,
And in no other way you ever meet, [*To his Sons.*
But march one way, and drive the world before you!
The victor, as our antient rites decree,
Must hold a feast, and triumph in the bowl.
Dem. I long, my lord, to see the charge begin;
The brandished faulchion, and the clashing helm;
Though but in sport, it is a sport for men.
Raw Alexander thus began his fame,
And overthrew Darius, first, at home.
We'll practise o'er the plans of future conquests,
While neighbouring nations tremble at our play,
And own the fault in fortune, not in us,
That we but want a foe to be immortal.
Per. You have supplied my wants: I thank you, brother.
King. [*Rising, and coming forward. Music.*]
How vain all outward efforts to supply
The soul with joy! The noon-tide sun is dark,
And music discord, when the heart is low.
Avert its omen! what a damp hangs on me!
These sprightly, tuneful airs, but skim along
The surface of my soul, not enter there:
She does not dance to this enchanting sound.
How, like a broken instrument, beneath
The skilful touch, my joyless heart lies dead,
Nor answers to the master's hand divine!
Antig. When men once reach their autumn, sickly joys
Fall off apace, as yellow leaves from trees,
At every little breath misfortune blows;
Till, left quite naked of their happiness,
In the chill blasts of winter they expire.
This is the common lot. Have comfort, then:
Your grief will damp the triumph.
King. It is over.
Hear too; the trumpet calls us to the field,
And now this phantom of a fight begins.
Fair princess, you and I will go together,
As Priam and bright Helen did of old,
To view the war. Your eyes will make them bolder,
And raise the prize of victory itself.
[*All go out but* PERSEUS, *who has observed* DEMETRIUS *and* ERIXENE *all this time conversing, and stays behind, thoughtful and disturbed.*
Per. Before my face she feeds him with her smiles:
The king looks on, nor disapproves the crime;
And the boy takes them as not due to me,
Without remorse, as happy as she'll make him.
Perish all three! I'll seek allies elsewhere;
Father and brother, nay, a mistress too.
Destruction, rise! Though thou art black as Night,
Thy mother, and as hideous as Despair,
I'll clasp thee thus, nor think of woman more.
How the boy doats, and drinks in at his eyes
Her poison! O to stab him in her arms,
And yet do less than they have done to me!

Enter PERICLES.

Peri. Where is my prince? The nation's on the wing;
No bosom but exults; no hand but bears
A garland or a trophy: and shall Perseus——
Per. Vengeance!
Peri. Hear how with shouts they rend the skies! [*Shouts within.*
Per. Give me my vengeance!
Peri. Forty thousand men,
In polished armour, shine against the sun.
Per. Dare but another word, and not of vengeance,
And I will use thee, as I would—my brother.
Peri. Vengeance! on whom?
Per. On him.
Peri. What vengeance?
Per. Blood.
Peri. 'Tis your's.
Per. What god will give it me?
Peri. Your own right hand.
Per. I dare not—for my father.
Peri. You shall dare.
Per. Shalt thou dare give encouragement to Perseus?
Unfold thy purpose; I'll outshoot the mark.
Peri. Where are you going?
Per. To the mock encounter.
Peri. What more like mock encounter than the true?
Per. Enough—He's dead! 'Twas accident, 'twas error,
No matter what. Ten thousand share the blame.
Peri. Hold, sir! I had forgot; on this occasion,
The troops are searched; and foils alone are worn,
Instead of swords.
Per. An osier were enough.
Who pains my heart, plants thunder in my hand.
Peri. But should this fail——
Per. Impossible!
Peri. But, should it,
The banquet follows.
Per. Poison in his wine!
I thank the gods! my spirits are revived!
I draw immortal vigour from that bowl!
Peri. Nay, should both fail, the field and banquet too,
All fails not: fairer hopes to fair succeed:
For know, my lord, the king received, with joy,
The marriage-scheme, and sent for Dymas' daughter.

Per. Then there's a second bowl of poison for him.
Peri. Yet more: this evening those ambassadors,
Which Philip sent to Rome, beneath the name
Of public business, but, in truth, to learn
Your brother's conduct, are expected home.
Per. Those whom I swore, before they parted hence,
In dreadful sacraments of wine and blood,
To bring back such reports as should destroy him:
And what if, to complete our secret plan,
We feign a letter to his friend the consul,
To strengthen our ambassadors' report?
Peri. That care, my lord, be mine: I know a knave,
Grown fat on forgery; he'll counterfeit
Old Quintius' hand and seal, by former letters
Sent to the king; which you can gain with ease.
Per. Observe—This morning, at their interview,
The Romans, in effect, informed the king,
That Thrace was theirs, and ordered him restore
The princess. This will give much air of truth,
If our forged letters say the Romans crown
Demetrius king of Thrace, and promise more.
Peri. My lord, it shall be done.
Per. All cannot fail. [*Trumpets.*
Peri. The trumpets sound: the troops are mounted.
Per. Vengeance,
Sweet Vengeance calls: nor ever called a God
Such swift obedience: like the rapid wheel
I kindle in the course; I am there already;
Snatch the bright weapon; bound into my seat;
Strike; triumph; see him gasping on the ground,
And life, love, empire, springing from his wound.
When god-like ends, by means unjust, succeed,
The great result adorns the daring deed;
Virtue's a shackle, under fair disguise,
To fetter fools, while we bear off the prize.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter PERSEUS.

Per. Cowards in ill, like cowards in the field,
Are sure to be defeated. To strike home,
In both, is prudence: guilt, begun, must fly
To guilt consummate, to be safe.

Enter PERICLES.

Peri. My lord——
Per. Disturb not my devotions; they decline
The beaten track, the common track of prayer.—
Ye powers of darkness, that rejoice in ill;
All sworn by Styx, with pestilential blasts
To wither every virtue in the bud;
To keep the door of dark conspiracy,
And snuff the grateful fumes of human blood!
From sulphur blue, or your red beds of fire,
On your black ebon thrones, auspicious rise;
And bursting through the barriers of this world,
Stand in dread contrast to the golden sun;
Fright day-light hence with your infernal smile;
And howl aloud your formidable joy,
While I transport you with the fair record
Of what your faithful minister has done,
Beyond your inspiration, self-impelled,
To spread your empire, and secure his own!
Hear, and applaud!—Now, Pericles, proceed;
Speak, is the letter forged?
Peri. This moment, and might cheat
The cunning eye of jealousy itself.
Per. 'Tis well: Art thou apprised of what hath passed
Since we last parted?
Peri. No, my lord.
Per. Then rouse
Thy whole attention: here we are in private:
Know, then, my Pericles, the mock encounter
I turned, as taught by thee, to real rage.
But, blasted be the cowards whom I led!
They trembled at a boy.
Peri. Ha!
Per. Mark me well:
The villains fled; but soon my prudence turned
To good account that momentary shame.
Thus—I pretend 'twas voluntary flight
To save a brother's blood; accusing him
As author of that conflict I declined,
And he pursued with ardour and success.
Peri. That's artful. What ensued?
Per. The banquet followed,
Held by the victor, as our rites require:
To which his easy nature, soon appeased,
Invited me. I went not; but sent spies
To learn what passed; which spies, by chance detected,
(Observe me) were ill used.
Peri. By whom? your brother?
Per. No; by his sons of riot. He soon after,
Not knowing that my servants were abused,
Kind, and gay-hearted, came to visit me.
They, who misused my spies, for self-defence,
Concealed their arms beneath the robes of peace.
Of this informed, again my genius served me.
Peri. You took occasion, from these few in arms,
To charge a murderous assault on all?
Per. True, Pericles; but mark my whole address:
Against my brother swift I bar my gates;
Fly to my father, and with artful tears
Accuse Demetrius; first, of turning sports,
And guiltless exercise, to mortal rage;
Then of inviting me (still blacker guilt!)
To smiling death in an envenomed bowl;
And last, that, both these failing, mad with rage,
He threw his schemes of baffled art aside,
And with armed men avowedly sought my life.

Peri. Three startling articles, and well concerted,
Following each other in an easy train,
With fair similitude of truth. But, sir,
How bore your father?

Per. O! he shook! he fell!
Nor was his fleeting soul recalled with ease.

Peri. What said he when recovered?

Per. His resolve
I know not yet; but see, his minion comes;
And comes, perhaps, to tell me. But I'll go,
Sustain my part, and echo loud my wrongs;
Nought so like innocence as perfect guilt.
If he brings aught of moment, you'll inform me.

[*As* PERSEUS *goes off, he is seized by officers.*

Enter DYMAS.

Peri. How fares the king?

Dym. Even as an aged oak
Pushed to and fro, the labour of the storm,
Whose largest branches are struck off by thunder:
Yet still he loves, and on the mountain groans;
Strong in affliction, awful from his wounds,
And more revered in ruin than in glory.

Peri. I hear prince Perseus has accused his brother.

Dym. True; and the king's commands are now gone forth
To throw them both in chains; for farther thought
Makes Philip doubt the truth of Perseus' charge.

Peri. What then is his design?

Dym. They both this hour
Must plead their cause before him. Nay, already
His nobles, judges, counsellors, are met,
And public justice wears her sternest form:
A more momentous trial ne'er was known;
Whether the pleaders you survey as brothers,
Or princes known in arts, or famed for arms;
Whether you ponder, in their awful judge,
The tender parent, or the mighty king
Greece, Athens, hears the cause: the great result
Is life, or death; is infamy, or fame. [*Trumpets.*

Peri. What trumpets these?

Dym. They summon to the court. [*Exeunt.*

The Scene draws, and discovers the Court, King, &c.

Enter DYMAS, *and takes his place by the King.*

King. Bring forth the prisoners.
Strange trial this! Here sit I to debate,
Which vital limb to lop, nor that to save,
But render wretched life more wretched still.
What see I, but heaven's vengeance, in my sons?
Their guilt a scourge for mine? 'Tis thus Heaven writes
Its awful meaning plain in human deeds,
And language leaves to man.

Enter PERSEUS *and* DEMETRIUS, *in chains, from different sides of the stage;* PERSEUS, *followed by* PERICLES, *and* DEMETRIUS *by* ANTIGONUS.

Dym. Dread sir, your sons,

King. I have no sons; and that I ever had,
Is now my heaviest curse: and yet what care,
What pains I took to curb their rising rage!
How often have I ranged through history,
To find examples for their private use?
The Theban brothers did I set before them——
What blood! what desolation! but in vain!
For thee, Demetrius, did I go to Rome,
And bring thee patterns thence of brothers' love,
The Quintii, and the Scipios; but in vain:
If I'm a monarch, where is your obedience?
If I'm a father, where's your duty to me?
If old, your veneration due to years?
But I have wept, and you have sworn, in vain!
I had your ear, and enmity your heart.
How was this morning's counsel thrown away!
How happy is your mother in the grave!
She, when she bore you, suffered less: her pangs,
Her pungent pangs, throb through the father's heart.

Dem. You can't condemn me, sir, to worse than this.

King. Than what, thou young deceiver? While I live,
You both, with impious wishes, grasp my sceptre:
Nothing is sacred, nothing dear, but empire.
Brother, nor father, can you bear; fierce lust
Of empire burns, extinguished all beside.
Why pant you for it? to give others awe?
Be therefore awed yourselves, and tremble at it,
While in a father's hand.

Dym. My lord, your warmth
Defers the business.

King. Am I then too warm?
They that should shelter me from every blast,
To be themselves the storm! O! how Rome triumphs!
Oh! how they bring this hoary head to shame!
Conquest and fame, the labour of my life,
Now turn against me, and call in the world
To gaze at what was Philip, but who now
Wants even the wretch's privilege—a wish.
What can I wish? Demetrius may be guiltless;
What then is Perseus? Judgment hangs as yet
Doubtful o'er them; but I'm condemned already;
For both are mine; and one—is foul as hell.
Should these two hands wage war, (these hands less dear!)
What boots it which prevails? In both I bleed.
But I have done. Speak, Perseus, and at large;
You'll have no second hearing. Thou forbear.

[*To* DEMETRIUS.

Per. Speak!—'Twas with utmost struggle I forbore;
These chains were scarce designed to reach my tongue;
Their trespass is sufficient, stopping here.

[*Shewing his arms.*

These chains! for what? Are chains for innocence?
Not so; for, see, Demetrius wears them too.
Fool that I was to tremble at vain laws,
Nor learn from him defiance of their frown;
Since innocence and guilt are used alike,
Blood-thirsty stabbers, and their destined prey;

Perseus, and he——I will not call him brother:
[*Pointing at* DEMETRIUS.
He wants not that enhancement of his guilt.
King. But closer to the point; and lay before us
Your whole deportment this ill-fated day.
Per. Scarce was he cool from that embrace this morning,
Which you enjoined, and I sincerely gave;
Nor thought he planned my death within my arms;
When holding vile, oaths, honour, duty, love,
He fired our friendly sports to martial rage.
If war, why not fair war! But that has danger.
From hostile conflict, as from brothers' play,
He blushed not to invite me to his banquet.
I went not; and in that was I to blame?
Think you, there nothing had been found but peace,
From whence, soon after, sallied armed men?
Think you I nothing had to fear from swords,
When from their foils I scarce escaped with life?
Or poison might his valour suit as well:—
This passed, as suits his wisdom, Macedonians,
Who vaults o'er elder brothers to a throne.
With an armed rout he came to visit me.
Did I refuse to go, a bidden guest?
And should I welcome him, a threatening foe?
Resenting my refusal, boiling for revenge?
Dem. 'Tis false.
Ant. Forbear——The king!
Per. Had I received them,
You now had mourned my death, not heard my cause.
Dares he deny he brought an armed throng?
Call those I name; who dare this deed, dare all;
Yet will not dare deny, that this is true.
My death alone can yield a stronger proof;
Will no less proof than that content a father?
Peri. Perseus, you see, has art, as well as fire;
Nor have the wars worn Athens from his tongue.
Per. Let him, who seeks to bathe in brother's blood,
Not find well pleased the fountain whence it flowed!
Let him, who shudders at a brother's knife,
Find refuge in the bosom of a father:
For where else can I fly? Whom else implore?
I have no Romans, with their eagle's wings,
To shelter me; Demetrius borrows those,
To mount full rebel-high: I have their hatred;
And, thanks to Heaven! deserve it: good Demetrius
Can see your towns and kingdoms torn away
By these protectors, and ne'er lose his temper.
My weakness I confess; it makes me rave;
It makes me weep—and my tears rarely flow.
Peri. Was ever stronger proof of filial love?
Per. Vain are Rome's hopes, while you and I survive:
But should the sword take me, and age my father,
(Heaven grant they leave him to the stroke of age!)
The kingdom and the king are both their own;
A duteous loyal king, a sceptred slave,
A willing Macedonian slave to Rome.
King. First let an earthquake swallow Macedonia!
Per. How at such news would Hannibal rejoice!
How the great shade of Alexander smile!
The thought quite chokes me up; I can no more.
King. Proceed.
Per. No sir,——Why have I spoke at all?
'Twas needless: Philip justifies my charge;
Philip's the single witness, which I call,
To prove Demetrius guilty.
King. What dost mean?
Per. What mean I, sir! what mean I!—To run mad:
For who, unshaken both in heart and brain,
Can recollect it?
King. What?
Per. This morning's insult.
This morning they proclaimed him Philip's king;
This morning they forgave you for his sake.
O pardon, pardon! I could strike him dead.
King. More temper.
Per. Not more truth; that cannot be!
And that it cannot, one proof can't escape you;
For what but truth could make me, sir, so bold?
Rome puts forth all her strength to crown her minion;
Demetrius' vices, thriving of themselves,
Her fulsome flatteries dung to ranker growth.
Demetrius is the burden of her song;
Each river, hill, and dale, has learnt his name;
While elder Perseus in a whisper dies.
Demetrius treats; Demetrius gives us peace;
Demetrius is our god, and would be so.
My sight is short: look on him you that can:
What sage experience sits upon his brow,
What awful marks of wisdom, who vouchsafes
To patronize a father and a king?
Such patronage is treason.
King. Treason! Death.
Per. Nor let the ties of blood bind up the hands
Of justice; Nature's ties are broke already:
For, who contend before you? Your two sons?—
No; read aright, 'tis Macedon and Rome,
A well-masked foreigner, and your——only son,
Guard of your life, and—exile of your love.
Now, bear me to my dungeon: what so fit
As darkness, chains, and death, for such a traitor?
King. Speak, Demetrius.
Ant. My lord, he cannot speak; accept his tears—
Instead of words.
Per. His tears are false as they.
Now, with fine phrase, and foppery of tongue,
More graceful action, and a smoother tone,
That orator of fable, and fair face,
Will steal on your bribed hearts, and, as you listen,

Plain truth, and I, plain Perseus, are forgot.
Dem. My father! king! and judge! thrice awful power!
Your son, your subject, and your prisoner, hear;
Thrice humble state! If I have grace of speech,
(Which gives, it seems, offence) be that no crime,
Which oft has served my country, and my king:
Nor in my brother let it pass for virtue,
That, as he is, ungracious he would seem:
For, oh! he wants not art, though grace may fail him.
The wonted aids of those that are accused,
Has my accuser seized. He shed false tears,
That my true sorrows might suspected flow:
He seeks my life, and calls me murderer;
And vows no refuge can he find on earth,
That I may want it in a father's arms;
Those arms, to which even strangers fly for safety.
King. Speak to your charge.
Dem. He charges me with treason.
If I'm a traitor, if I league with Rome,
Why did his zeal forbear me till this hour?
Was treason then no crime, till (as he feigns)
I sought his life? Dares Perseus hold so much
His father's welfare cheaper than his own?
Less cause have I, a brother, to complain.
He says, I wade for empire through his blood:
He says, I place my confidence in Rome:
Why murder him, if Rome will crown my brow?
Will then a sceptre, dipped in brother's blood,
Conciliate love, and make my reign secure?
False are both charges; and he proves them false,
By placing them together.
Ant. That's well urged.
Dem. Mark, sir, how Perseus, unawares, absolves me
From guilt in all, by loading all with guilt.
Did I design him poison at my feast?
Why then did I provoke him in the field,
That, as he did, he might refuse to come?
When angry he refused, I should have soothed
His roused resentment, and deferred the blow;
Not destined him that moment to my sword,
Which I before instructed him to shun.
Through fear of death, did he decline my banquet?
Could I expect admittance then at his?
These numerous pleas, at variance, overthrow
Each other, and are advocates for me.
Per. No, sir, Posthumius is his advocate.
King. Art thou afraid, that I should hear him out?
Dem. Quit then this picture, this well-painted fear,
And come to that, which touches him indeed.
Why is Demetrius not despised of all,
His second in endowments, as in birth?
How dare I draw the thoughts of Macedon?
How dare I gain esteem with foreign powers?
Esteem, when gained, how dare I to preserve?
These are his secret thoughts; these burn within;
These sting up accusations in his soul;
Turn friendly visits to foul fraud, and murder;
And pour in poison to the bowl of love.
Merit is treason in a younger brother.
King. But clear your conduct with regard to Rome.
Dem. Alas! dread sir, I grieve to find set down
Among my crimes, what ought to be my praise.
That I went hostage, or ambassador,
Was Philip's high command, not my request:
Indeed, when there, in both those characters,
I bore in mind to whom I owed my birth:
Rome's favour followed. If it is a crime
To be regarded, spare a crime you caused;
Caused by your orders, and example too.
True, I'm Rome's friend, while Rome is your ally:
When not, this hostage, this ambassador,
So dear, stands forth the fiercest of her foes;
At your command, flies swift on wings of fire,
The native thunder of a father's arm.
Ant. There spoke at once the hero and the son!
Dem. To close—To thee, I grant, some thanks are due; [*Speaking to* PERSEUS.
Not for thy kindness, but malignity:
Thy character's my friend, though thou my foe:
For, say, whose temper promises most guilt?
Perseus, importunate, demands my death:
I do not ask for his: Ah, no! I feel
Too powerful nature pleading for him here:
But, were there no fraternal tie to bind me,
A son of Philip must be dear to me.
If you, my father, had been angry with me,
An elder brother, a less awful parent,
He should assuage you, he should intercede,
Soften my failings, and indulge my youth:
But my asylum drops its character;
I find not there my rescue, but my ruin.
Per. His bold assurance——
King. Do not interrupt him;
But let thy brother finish his defence.
Dem. O Perseus! how I tremble as I speak!
Where is a brother's voice, a brother's eye?
Where is the melting of a brother's heart?
Where is our awful father's dread command?
Where a dear dying mother's last request?
Forgot, scorned, hated, trodden under foot!
Thy heart, how dead to every call of nature!
Unson'd! unbrothered! nay, unhumanized!
Far from affection, as thou art near in blood!
Oh! Perseus! Perseus!—But my heart's too full. [*Falls on* ANTIGONUS.
King. Support him!
Per. Vengeance overtake his crimes!
King. No more!
Ant. See from his hoary brow he wipes the dew,
Which agony wrings from him.
King. Oh, my friend,
These boys at strife, like Ætna's struggling flames,
Convulsions cause, and make a mountain shake;
Shake Philip's firmness, and convulse his heart,
And, with a fiery flood of civil war,
Threaten to deluge my divided land.
I've heard them both; by neither am convinced;

And yet Demetrius' words went through my heart.—
A double crime, Demetrius, is your charge;
Fondness for Rome, and hatred to your brother.
If you can clear your innocence in one,
'Twill give us cause to think you wronged in both.
Dem. How shall I clear it, sir?
King. This honest man
Detests the Romans: if you wed his daughter,
Rome's foe becomes the guardian of your faith.
Dem. I told you, sir, when I returned from Rome—
King. How! Dost thou want an absolute command?
Your brother, father, country, all exact it.
Ant. See yonder guards at hand, if you refuse.
Nay, more; a father, so distressed, demands
A son's compassion, to becalm his heart.
Oh! sir, comply. [*Aside to* DEMETRIUS.
Dem. There! there indeed you touch me!
Besides, if I'm confined, and Perseus free,
I never, never shall behold her more.—
Pardon, ye gods! an artifice forced on me.
[*Aside to* ANTIGONUS.
Dread sir, your son complies. [*To the King.*
Dym. Astonishment!
King. Strike off his chains. Nay, Perseus too is free:
They wear no bonds, but those of duty, now.
Dymas, go thank the prince: he weds your daughter;
And highest honours pay your high desert.
[*Exeunt all but* DYM. *and* DEM.
Dym. O, sir, without presumption, may I dare
To lift my ravished thought?—
Dem. In what I've done,
I paid a duty to my father's will:
And set you an example, where 'tis due,
Of not with-holding yours.
Dym. My duty, sir,
To you, can never fail.
Dem. Then, Dymas, I request thee,
Go seek the king, and save me from a marriage
My brother has contrived, in artful malice,
To make me lose my father, or my love.
Go, charge the just refusal on thyself.
Dym. What Philip authorizes me to wish,
You, sir, may disappoint. But, to take on me
The load of the refusal—
Dem. Is no more
Than Dymas owes his honour, if he'd shun
The natural surmise, that he concurred
In brewing this foul treason.
Dym. Sir, the king
Knows what he does: and, if he seeks my glory—
Dem. In a degree, destructive of his own,
'Tis your's to disappoint him, or renounce
Your duty to your king.
Dym. You'll better tell——
Dem. Yes, better tell the king he wounds his honour,
By lifting up a minion from the dust,
And mating him with princes! Use your power
Against yourself; yes, use it like a man,
In serving him, who gave it. Thus you'll make
Indulgence, justice; and absolve your master.
Though kings delight in raising what they love,
Less owe they to themselves than to the throne;
Nor must they prostitute its majesty,
To swell a subject's pride, howe'er deserving.
Dym. What the king grants me——
Dem. Talk not of a grant;
What a king ought not, that he cannot give;
And what is more than meet from prince's bounty,
Is plunder, not a grant. Think you, his honour
A perquisite belonging to your place,
As favourite paramount? Preserve the king
From doing wrong, though wrong is done for you,
And shew, 'tis not in favour to corrupt thee.
Dym. I sought not, sir, this honour.
Dem. But would take it.
True majesty's the very soul of kings;
And rectitude's the soul of majesty:
If mining minions sap that rectitude,
The king may live, but majesty expires:
And he, that lessens majesty, impairs
That just obedience public good requires;
Doubly a traitor, to the crown and state.
Dym. Must I refuse what Philip's pleased to give?
Dem. Can a king give thee more than is his own?
Know, a king's dignity is public wealth;
On that subsists the nation's fame and power.
Shall fawning sycophants, to plump themselves,
Eat up their master, and dethrone his glory?
What are such wretches? What, but vapours foul,
From fens and bogs, from royal beams exhaled,
That radiance intercepting, which should cheer
The land at large? Hence subjects' hearts grow cold,
And frozen loyalty forgets to flow;
But, then 'tis slippery standing for the minion:
Stains on his ermine, to their royal master
Such miscreants are; not jewels in his crown.
If you persist, sir—But, of words no more!
To me, to threat is harder than to do.
Dym. Let me embrace this genuine son of empire!
When warm debates divide the doubtful land,
Should I not know the prince most fit to reign?
I've tried you as an eagle tries her young,
And find, your dauntless eye is fixed on glory.
I'll to the king, and your commands obey.—
We must give young men opiates in a fever.
[*Aside.*
Yes, boy, I will obey thee, to thy ruin!
Erixene shall strike thee dead for this.
[*Exit* DYMAS.
Dem. These statesmen nothing woo but gold and power;
I'm a bold advocate for other love,
Though, at their bar, indicted for a fool.
When reason, like the skilful charioteer,
Can break the fiery passions to the bit,
And, spite of their licentious sallies, keep
The radiant track of glory—passions, then,
Are aids and ornaments. Triumphant reason,

Firm in her seat, and swift in her career,
Enjoys their violence, and, smiling, thanks
Their formidable flame, for high renown.
Take, then, my soul, fair maid! 'tis wholly thine;
And thence I feel an energy divine.
When objects worthy praise our hearts approve,
Each virtue grows on consecrated love:
And, sure, soft passion claims to be forgiven,
When love of beauty is the love of Heaven.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter ERIXENE *and* DELIA.

Erix. 'Tis plain! 'tis plain! this marriage gains her father;
He, joined to Rome, the crown. Thy words were true;
He woos the diadem; that diadem, which I
Despised for him. Oh, how unlike our loves!
But it is well; he gives me my revenge.
Wed Dymas' daughter! What a fall is there!
Not the world's empire could repair his glory.
Del. Madam, you can't be moved too much: But why
More now than at the first?
Erix. At first I doubted;
For who, that loved like me, could have believed?
I disbelieved what Pericles reported;
And thought it Perseus' art to wound our loves.
But when the good Antigonus, sworn friend
To false Demetrius, when his word confirmed it,
Then passion took me, as the northern blast
An autumn leaf. O gods! the dreadful whirl!
But, while I speak, he's with her: laughs and plays;
Mingles his dalliance with insulting mirth;
To this new goddess offers up my tears;
Yes, with my shame and torture, woos her love.
I see, hear, feel it! O these raging fires!
Can then the thing we scorn give so much pain?
Del. Madam, these transports give him cause to triumph.
Erix. I vent my grief to thee; he ne'er shall know it;
If I can't conquer, I'll conceal my passion,
And stifle all its pangs beneath disdain.
Del. The greatest minds are most relenting too;
If then Demetrius should repent his crime——
Erix. If still my passion burns, it shall burn inward;
On the fierce rack in silence I'll expire,
Before one sigh escape me.—He repent!
What wild extravagance of thought is thine!
But did he? Who repents, has once been false:
In love, repentance but declares our guilt;
And injured honour shall exact its due.
In vain his love, nay mine, should groan in vain;
Both are devoted. Vengeance, vengeance reigns!
Our first love, murdered, is the sharpest pang
A human heart can feel.
Del. The king approaches.

Enter the King, &c.

King. Madam, at length we see the dawn of peace,
And hope an end of our domestic jars.
The jealous Perseus can no longer fear
Demetrius is a Roman, since this day
Makes him the son of Dymas, Rome's worst foe.
Erix. Already, sir, I've heard, and heard with joy,
The important news.
King. To make our bliss run o'er,
You, madam, will complete what Heaven begins,
And save the love-sick Perseus from despair.
That marriage would leave Rome without pretence
To touch our conquest; and for ever join
To these dominions long disputed Thrace.

Enter DYMAS.

Erix. Though Thrace by conquest stoops to Macedon,
I know my rank, and would preserve its due.
With meditated coldness have I heard
Prince Perseus' vows; unwilling to consent
Before restored to my forefathers' throne,
Lest that consent should merit little thanks,
As flowing less from choice than your command:
But since the Roman pride will find account
In my persisting still, and Philip suffer,
I quit the lofty thought on which I stood,
And yield to your request.
King. Indulgent gods!
Blest moment! How will this with transport fill
The doubtful Perseus, after years of pain!
Dym. My lord, I've heard what passed, and give you joy
Of Perseus' nuptials, which your state requires:
But for Demetrius'—think of those no more.
Far from accepting such a load of glory,
I bring, I bring, my lord, this forfeit head,
Due to my bold refusal.
King. Dares the boy
Fall from his promise, and impose on thee
Forced disobedience to my royal pleasure?
Dym. No, my most honoured lord, there, there's my crime:
Fond of the maid, with ardour he pressed on;
But should I dare pollute his blood with mine?
But you, sir, authorize it—still more base,
To wrong a master so profusely kind.
King. That man is noble, on whom Philip smiles;
Come, come, there's something more in this—explain.

Dym. Why am I forced on this ungrateful office?
Yet can't I tell you more than fame has told,
Which says, Demetrius is in league with Rome.
Why weds ambition then an humble maid,
But to gain me to treason? What then follows?
They'll say, the subtle statesman planned this marriage,
To raise his blood into his master's throne.
No, sir, preserve my fame, let life suffice.

Enter PERICLES.

Peri. Sir, your ambassador's arrived from Rome— [*Presents a letter.*
King. Ha! I must read it; this will tell me more. [*After reading it.*
Oh, princess! Now our only comfort flows
From your indulgence to my better son.
This dreadful news precipitates my wish.
To keep rapacious Rome from seizing Thrace,
You cannot wed too soon: my fair ally!
What if you bless me and my son to-morrow?
Erix. Since you request, and your affairs demand it,
Without a blush, I think I may comply.
King. Oh, daughter!—but no more; the gods will thank you.
I go to bless my Perseus with the news.
Dym. Thus the boy's dead in empire and in love. [*Exeunt King*, DYMAS, *&c.*
Erix. I triumph! I'm revenged! I reign! I reign!
Nor thank Demetrius' treason for a crown.
Love is our own cause, honour is the gods'.
I can be glorious without happiness;
But without glory never can be blest.
Del. 'Tis well: but can you wed the man you scorn?
Erix. Wed any thing for vengeance on the perjured.
I'll now insult him from an higher sphere;
This unexpected turn may gall his pride.
Whate'er has pangs for him, has charms for me.
Del. A rooted love is scarce so soon removed.
Erix. If not, the greater virtue to controul it;
And strike at his heart, though 'tis through my own.
Del. I cannot but praise this triumph, but I dread
The combat still. And see, the foe draws near.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Erixene!
Erix. My lord?
Dem. My pale cheek speaks;
My trembling limbs prevent my faultering tongue,
And ask you——
Erix. What, my lord?
Dem. My lord? Her eyes
Confirm it true, and yet, without a crime,
I can't believe it. Oh, Erixene!——
Erix. I guess your meaning, sir; but am surprised
That Dymas' son should think of aught I do.
Dem. False are my senses! False both ear and eye!
All, all be rather false than her I love!
Erix. She passed not, sir, this way.
Dem. Is then my pain
Your sport? And can Erixene pretend
Herself deceived by what deceived the king?
An artifice made use of for your sake;
A proof, not violation, of my love?
Erix. I thought not of your love, nor artifice;
Both were forgot; or rather, never known.
But, without artifice, I tell you this;
Your brother lays his sceptre at my feet—
And whose example bids my heart resist
The charms of empire?
Dem. This is woman's skill;
You cease to love, and from my conduct strive
To labour an excuse. For if, indeed,
You thought me false, had you been thus serene,
Calm and unruffled! No; my heart says, no.
Passions, if great, though turned to their reverse,
Keep their degree, and are great passions still;
And she, who, when she thinks her lover false,
Retains her temper, never lost her heart.
Erix. That I'm serene, says not I never loved.
Indeed, the vulgar float as passion drives;
But noble minds have reason for their queen.
While you deserved, my passion was sincere:
You change, my passion dies. But, pardon, sir,
If my vain mind thinks anger is too much;
Take my neglect, I can afford no more.
Dem. No? rage! flame! thunder! give a thousand deaths!
Oh, rescue me from this more dreadful calm,
This cursed indifference! which, like a frost
In northern seas, outdoes the fiercest storm.
Commanded by my father to comply,
I feigned obedience: had I then refused——
Erix. I grant the consequence had been most dreadful!
I grant, that Dymas' daughter had been angry.
Dem. Ask Dymas with what rage——
Erix. You well might rage,
To be refused.
Dem. Refused!
Erix. He told your secret;
The king, and I, and all the court can witness.
Dem. Refused! False villain! Oh the perjured slave!
Hell-born impostor! Madam, 'tis most false!—
Warm from my heart is every word I speak,—
The villain lies! Believe the pangs, that rend me;
Believe the witness streaming from my eyes,
And let me speak no more.
Erix. I do believe
Your grief sincere. I've heard the maid is fair.
Dem. Proceed; and thus, indeed, commit that crime,
You falsely charge on me. The crown has charmed you.
How warm this morning did you press my flight!
The cause is plain: an outraged lover's groan,
And dying agony, molest your ear,

And hurt the music of a nuptial song.
Erix. Since your inconstancy persists to charge
Its crime on my ambition, I'll be kind;
And leave you in possession of an error,
Of which you seem so fond.
Dem. Ah! stay one moment!

Enter PERSEUS *and* PERICLES.

Per. Erixene!
Dem. Distraction! [*Starting.*
Erix. 'Tis well timed.—
My lord, your brother doubts if I'm sincere,
And thinks (an error natural to him)
I'll break my vow to you. You will clear my fame,
And labour to convince him, that to-morrow
Erixene's at once a bride and queen. [*Exit.*
Per. When I have worked him up to violence,
Bring thou the king, and pity my distress.
[*To* PERICLES, *who goes out.*
Dem. On what extremes extreme distress compels me!
In things impossible I put my trust:
I, in my only brother, find a foe;
Yet, in my rival, hope the greatest friend.
When all our hopes are lodged in such expedients,
'Tis as if poison were our only food,
And death was called on as the guard of life.
Per. Why dost thou droop?
Dem. Because I am dead; quite dead
To hope, and yet rebellious to despair;
Like ghosts unblessed, that burst the bars of death.
Strange is my conduct, stranger my distress:
Beyond example both! Whoe'er before me
Pressed his worst foe to prove his truest friend?
But though thou'rt not my brother, thou'rt a man;
And, if a man, compassionate the worst
That man can feel; though found that worst in me.
Per. What would'st?
Dem. Unclinch thy talons from thy prey;
Let the dove fly to this her nest again.
[*Striking his breast.*
For, oh! the maid's unalienably mine,
Though now through rage run mad, and turned to thee.
How often have I languished at her feet,
Basked in her eye, and revelled in her smile!
How often, as she listened to my vows,
Trembling and pale with agonies of joy,
Have I left earth, and mounted to the stars!
Per. There Dymas' daughter shone above the rest,
Illustrious in thy sight.
Dem. Thy taunt, how false!
I no less press your interest, than my own.
Think you 'tis possible her heart, so long
Inclined to me, the price of all my vows,
Purchased by tears and groans, and paid me down
In tenderest returns of love divine,
Can in one day be yours? Impossible!
Per. If I'm deceived, I'm pleased with the deceit.
How my heart dances in the golden dream!
In pity do not wake me, till to-morrow.
Dem. Then thou wilt wake distracted. Trust me, brother,
She gives her hand alone.
Per. Nor need I more:
That hand's enough, that brings a sceptre in it.
I scorn a prince, who weds with meaner views.
Her duty's mine, and I conceive small pain
From your sweet error, that her love is your's.
I'm pleased such cordial thoughts of your own merit
Support you in distress.
Dem. Inhuman Perseus!
If pity dwells within the heart of man,
If due that pity to the last distress,
Pity a lover exquisitely pained,
A lover exquisitely pained by you.
Oh! in the name of all the gods, relent!
Give me my princess, give her to my throes!
Amidst a thousand you may chuse a love;
The spacious earth contains but one for me.
But, oh! I rave. Art thou not he, the man,
Who drinks my groans like music to his ear,
And would, as wine, as nectar, drink my blood?
Are all my hopes of mercy lodged in thee?
Oh, rigid gods! and shall I then fall down,
Embrace thy feet, and bathe them with my tears?
Yes, I will drown thee with my tears, my blood,
So thou afford a human ear to pangs,
A brother's pangs, a brother's broken heart!
Per. Pardon, Demetrius; but the princess calls,
And I am bound to go.
Dem. Oh, stay! [*Laying hold of him.*
Per. You tremble.
Dem. The princess calls, and you are bound to go!
Per. E'en so.
Dem. What princess?
Per. Mine.
Dem. 'Tis false!
Per. Unhand me.
Dem. What, see, talk, touch, nay, taste her like a bee,
Draw honey from her wounded lip, while I
Am stung to death!
Per. The triumph once was your's.
Dem. Rip up my breast, or you shall never stir.
My heart may visit her! Oh, take it with you!
Have I not seen her, where she has not been?
Have I not clasped her shadow? trod her steps?
Transported trod, as if they led to Heaven?
Each morn my life I lighted at her eye,
And every evening, at its close expired.
[*Bursts into tears.*
Per. Fie! thou art a Roman; can a Roman weep?
Sure Alexander's helmet can sustain
Far heavier strokes than these. For shame, Demetrius;
E'en snatch up the next Sabine in thy way,

'Twill do as well. [*Going.*

Dem. By Heaven you shall not stir.
Long as I live, I stand a world between you,
And keep you distant as the poles asunder.
Who takes my love, in mercy take my life;
Thy bloody pass cleave through thy brother's breast.
I beg, I challenge, I provoke my death.
[*His hand upon his sword.*

Enter King and DYMAS.

Per. You will not murder me?
Dem. Yes, you and all.
King. How like a tiger foaming o'er his prey!
Per. Now, sir, believe your eyes, believe your ears,
And still believe me perjured as this morning.
King. Heaven's wrath's exhausted, there's no more to fear.
My darling son found criminal in all!
Dem. That villain there to blast me! Yes, I'll speak;
For what have I to fear, who feel the worst?
'Tis time the truth were known. That villain, sir,
Has cleft my heart, and laughs to see it bleed:
But his confession shall redeem my fame,
And re-enthrone me in my princess' smile;
Or I'll return that false embrace he gave me,
And stab him in your sight.
King. Hold, insolent!
Where's your respect to me?
Dem. Oh, royal sir!
That has undone me. Through respect I gave
A feigned consent, which his black artifice
Has turned to my destruction. I refused
That slave's, that cursed slave's, that statesman's daughter,
And he pretends she was refused to me.
Hence, hence this desolation. Nought I fear,
Though nature groan her last. And shall he then
Escape and triumph?
King. Guards there! Seize the prince!
[*He is seized.*
The man you menace you shall learn to fear.
Dym. Hold, sir! not this for me! It is your son:
What is my life, though poured upon your feet?
King. Is this a son?
Dem. No, sir; my crime's too great,
Which dares to vindicate a father's honour,
To catch the glories of a falling crown,
And save it from pollution. But I've done.
I die, unless my princess is restored;
[*Pointing to* DYMAS.
And if I die, by heaven, and earth, and hell!
His sordid blood shall mingle with the dust,
And see if thence 'twill mount into the throne.
Oh, sir, think of it! I'll expect my fate. [*Exit.*
King. And thou shalt have it.
Dym. How, my lord; in tears!
King. As if the gods came down in evidence,
How many sudden rays of proof concur
To my conviction? Was ever equal boldness?
But 'tis no wonder from a brother king!
[*Produces the forged letter.*
This king of Thrace—To-morrow he'll be king
Of Macedon——He there foredies to-night.
Per. And yet I doubt it, for I know his fondness.
Thou practise well the lesson I have taught thee,
While I put on a solemn face of woe,
Afflicted for a brother's early fall.
[*Aside to* DYMAS.
Heaven knows with what regret—But, sir, your safety—
[*Presenting the mandate for* DEMETRIUS'S *death.*
King. What giv'st thou here?
Dym. Your passport to renown;
You sign your apotheosis in that.
What scales the skies, but zeal for public good?
Per. How god-like mercy!
Dym. Mercy to mankind,
By treason awed.
King. Must then thy brother bleed?
[*To* PERSEUS.
[DYMAS *seeming at a loss,* PERSEUS *whispers him, and gives a letter.*
Dym. No, sir, the king of Thrace.
[*Looking on the letter.*
King. Why that is true——
Yet, who, if not a father, should forgive?
Dym. Who, sir, if not a Philip, should be just?
King. Is't not my son? [*To* DYMAS.
Dym. If not, far less his guilt.
King. Is't not my other Perseus!
[*To* PERSEUS.
Per. Sir, I thank you;
That seeks your crown and life.
King. And life?
Dym. No, sir;
He'll only take your crown; you still may live.
King. Heaven blast thee for that thought!
Per. Why shakes my father?
King. It stabs, it gnaws, it harrows up my soul.
Is he not young? Was he not much indulged?
Galled by his brother? Doubted by his father?
Tempted by Rome? A nation to a boy?
Dym. Oh, a mere infant—that deposes kings.
King. No; once he saved my crown.
Dym. And now would wear it.
King. How my head swims!
Per. Nor strange; the task is hard.
Dym. Yet scarce for him. Brutus was but a Roman;
[*Speaking, as if he would not have the king hear.*
Yet, like a Philip dared, and is immortal.
King. I hear thee, Dymas; give me then the mandate. [*Going to sign, he stops short.*
Dym. No wonder if his mother thus had paused.
Per. Rank cankers on thy tongue! Why mention her? [*Aside.*
King. Oh, gods! I see her now: what am I doing! [*Throws away the style.*

I see her dying eye let fall a tear
In favour of Demetrius. Shall I stab
Her lovely image, stampt on every feature?
Dym. His soul escaped it, sir.
King. Thou liest; begone.
[PERSEUS *and* DYMAS *in great confusion*—PERSEUS *whispers* DYMAS.
Dym. True; that, or nought, will touch him.
[*Aside to* PERSEUS.
If, sir, your mercy——— [*To the king.*
Per. O speak on of mercy!
Mercy, the darling attribute of Heaven!
Dym. If you should spare him——
King. What if I should spare him?
Dym. I dare not say——Your wrath again might rise.
King. Yes, if thou'rt silent—What if I should spare him?
Dym. Why, if you would, proud Rome would thank you for it.
King. Rome! Her applause more shocks me than his death.
O, thou, Death's orator! Dread advocate
For bowelless severity! assist
My trembling hand, as thou hast steeled my heart;
And, if it is guilt in me, share the guilt.
He's dead. [*Signs.*] And if I blot it with one tear,
Perseus, though less affected, will forgive me.
Per. Forgive! Sir, I applaud, and wish my sorrow
Were mild enough to weep.
[*The King, going out, meets* DEMETRIUS *in mourning, introduced by* ANTIGONUS. *He starts back, and drops on* DYMAS. *Recovering, speaks.*]
King. This, Fate, is thy tenth wave, and quite o'erwhelms me:
It less had shocked me, had I met his ghost.
This is a plot to sentence me to death.
What hast thou done, my mortal foe! thrown bars [*To* ANTIGONUS.
Athwart my glory? But thy scheme shall fail.
As rushing torrents sweep the obstructed mound,
So Philip meets this mountain in his way,
Yet keeps his purpose still.
[PERSEUS *and* PERICLES *whisper aside.*
Peri. I can't but fear it.
Per. I grant the danger great, yet don't despair.
Jove is against thee, Perseus on thy side.
Ant. The prince, dread sir, low on his bended knee——
King. This way, Antigonus. Dost mark his bloom?
Grace in his aspect, grandeur in his mien!
Ant. I do.
King. 'Tis false; take a king's word. He's dead.
That darling of my soul would stab me sleeping.
How dar'st thou start? Art thou the traitor's father?
If thou art pale, what is enough for me?
How his grave yawns! Oh, that it were my own!
Ant. Mourn not the guilty.
King. No, he's innocent:
Death pays his debt to justice, and that done,
I grant him still my son; as such I love him:
Yes, and will clasp him to my breast, while yet
His clay is warm, nor moulders at my touch.
Per. A curse on that embrace! [*Aside.*
Dym. Nay, worse; he weeps.
King. Poor boy, be not deceived by my compassion;
My tears are cruel, and I groan thy death.
Dem. And am I then to die? If death's decreed,
Stab me yourself, nor give me to the knife
Of midnight ruffians, that have forged my crimes.
For you I beg, for you I pour my tears;
You are deceived, dishonoured; I am only slain.
Oh, father!——
King. Father! there's no father here.
Forbear to wound me with that tender name,
Nor raise all nature up in arms against me!
Dem. My father! guardian! friend! nay, deity!
What less than gods give being, life, and death?
My dying mother——
King. Hold thy peace, I charge thee.
Dem. Pressing your hand, and bathing it with tears,
Bequeathed your tenderness for her to me;
And low on earth my legacy I claim,
Clasping your knees, though banished from your breast.
King. My knees! Would that were all! he grasps my heart!
Perseus, canst thou stand by, and see me ruined?
[*Reaching his hand to* PERSEUS.
Per. Loose, loose thy hold. It is my father too.
King. Yes, Macedon, and thine, and I'll preserve thee.
Dem. Who once before preserved it from the Thracian?
And who, at Thrasymene, turned the lifted bolt
From Philip's hoary brow?
King. I'll hear no more.
O Perseus! Dymas! Pericles! assist me,
Unbind me, disenchant me, break this charm
Of nature, that accomplice with my foes;
Rend me, O rend me, from the friend of Rome!
Per. Nay, then, howe'er reluctant, aid I must.
The friend of Rome! That severs you for ever,
Though most incorporate and strongly knit,
As lightning rends the knotted oak asunder.
Dem. In spite of lightning I renew the tie;
And stubborn is the grasp of dying men.
Who's he that shall divide me from myself?
[DEMETRIUS *is forced from the king's knees, on which, starting up, he flings his arms round his father.*]
Still of a piece with him, from whom I grew,
I'll bleed on my asylum, dart my soul
In this embrace, and thus my treason crown.
King. Who love yourselves, or Macedon, or me,
From the cursed eagle's talons wrench my crown,

And this barbed arrow from my breast.—'Tis done, [*Forced asunder.*
And the blood gushes after it. I faint!
Dym. Support the king!
Per. While treason licks the dust.
[*Pointing at* DEMETRIUS, *fallen in the struggle.*
Dym. A field well fought.
Per. And justice has prevailed.
King. O, that the traitor could conceal the son!
Farewell, once best beloved! still more deplored!
He, he, who dooms thee, bleeds upon thy tomb. [*Exit.*
Dem. Prostrate on thee, my mother earth, be thou
Kinder than brother, or than father; open,
And save me in thy bosom from my—friends;
Friends, sworn to wash their hands in guiltless tears,
And quench infernal thirst in kindred blood;
As if relation severed human hearts,
Or that destruction were the child of love!
Per. Farewell, young traitor: if they ask below,
Who sent thee beardless down, say, honest Perseus;
Whom reason sways, not instinct; who can strike
At horrid parricide, and flagrant treason,
Though through a bosom dearer than his own.
Think'st thou my tender heart can hate a brother?
The gods and Perseus war with nought but guilt.
But I must go. What, sir, your last commands
To your Erixene? She chides my stay. [*Exit.*
Dem. Without that token of a brother's love
He could not part; my death was not enough.
I came for mercy, and I find it here;
And death is mercy, since my love is lost.
Alas! my father too! my heart aches for him.
And Perseus—fain would I forgive even thee:
But Philip's sufferings cry too loud against it.
Blind author, and sure mourner of my death!
Father most dear!—What pangs hast thou to come?
Like that poor wretch is thy unhappy doom,
Who, while in sleep his fevered fancy glows,
Draws his keen sword, and sheaths it in his foes;
But, waking, starts upright, in wild surprise,
To feel warm blood glide round him as he lies;
To see his reeking hands in crimson dyed,
And a pale corse extended by his side:
He views with horror what mad dreams have done,
And sinks, heart-broken, on a murdered son.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

King, POSTHUMIUS, *&c. meeting.*

Post. We, in behalf of our allies, O king!
Called on thee yesterday, to clear thy glory.
No wonder now, that Philip is unjust
To strangers, who has murdered his own son.
King. 'Tis false.
Post. No thanks to Philip, that he fled.
King. A traitor is no son.
Post. Heaven's vengeance on me,
If he refused not yesterday thy crown,
Though life and love both bribed him to comply.
King. See there! [*Gives the letter.*
Post. 'Tis not the consul's hand or seal.
King. You're his accomplices.
Post. We're his avengers.
'Tis war.
King. Eternal war.
Post. Next time we meet——
King. Is in the capitol. Haste, fly my kingdoms!
Post. No longer thine.
King, Yes, and proud Rome a province.
[*Exeunt* POSTHUMIUS, *&c.*
They brave, they make, they tyrannize o'er kings.
The name of king the prostrate world adored,
Ere Romulus had called his thieves together.
But let me pause—Not Quintius' hand or seal?
Doubt and impatience, like thick smoke and fire,
Cloud and torment my reason.
Ant. Sir, recall,
And re-examine those you sent to Rome:
You took their evidence in haste and anger.
Torture, if they refuse, will tell the truth.
King. Go, stop the nuptials, till you hear from me. [*Exeunt King and* ANTIGONUS.

SCENE II.

Enter ERIXENE *and* DELIA, *meeting.*

Del. Madam, the prince, who fled from threatened death,
Attempting his escape to foreign realms,
Was lately taken at the city gates,
So strongly guarded by his father's powers;
And now, confined, expects his final doom.
Erix. Imprisoned, and to die!—And let him die.
Bid Dymas' daughter weep. I half forgot
His perjured insolence; I'll go and glut
My vengeance. Oh, how just a traitor's death!
And blacker still, a traitor to my love.
[*Exeunt* ERIXENE *and* DELIA.

Scene draws, and shews DEMETRIUS *in prison.*

Dem. Thou subterranean sepulchre of peace!
Thou home of horror! hideous nest of crimes!
Guilt's first sad stage in her dark road to hell!
Ye thick-barred sunless passages for air,
To keep alive the wretch that longs to die!

Ye low-browed arches, through whose sullen gloom
Resound the ceaseless groans of pale despair!
Ye dreadful shambles, caked with human blood!
Receive a guest from far, far other scenes,
From pompous courts, from shouting victories,
Carousing festivals, harmonious bowers,
And the soft chains of heart-dissolving love.
Oh, how unlike to these! Heart-breaking load
Of shame eternal, ne'er to be knocked off!
Oh welcome death!—no, never but by thee!—
Nor has a foe done this. A friend! a father!—
Oh, that I could have died without their guilt!—

Enter ERIXENE, DEMETRIUS *gazing at her.*

So looked in chaos the first beam of light:
How drives the strong enchantment of her eye
All horror hence!—How die the thoughts of death!

Erix. I knew not my own heart. I cannot bear it.
Shame chides me back; for, to insult his woes
Is too severe; and to condole, too kind. [*Going.*

Dem. Thus I arrest you in the name of mercy,
And dare compel your stay. Is then one look,
One word, one moment, a last moment too,
When I stand tottering on the brink of death,
A cruel ignominious death, too much
For one, that loves like me? A length of years
You may devote to my blest rival's arms;
I ask but one short moment. O permit,
Permit the dying to lay claim to thee!
To thee, thou dear equivalent for life,
Cruel, relentless, marble-hearted maid!

Erix. Demetrius, you persist to do me wrong;
For, know, though I behold thee as thou art,
Doubly a traitor, to the state and me,
Thy sorrow, thy distress, have touched my bosom:
I own it is a fault—I pity thee.

Enter Officer.

Offi. My lord, your time is short, and death waits for you.

Erix. Death!—I forgive thee from my inmost soul.

Dem. Forgive me? Oh! thou need'st not to forgive,
If imposition had not struck thee blind.
Truth lies in ambush yet, but will start up,
And seize thy trembling soul, when mine is fled.
O, I've a thousand, thousand things to say!

Erix. And I am come a secret to disclose,
That might awake thee, wert thou dead already!

Offi. My lord, your final moment is expired.

Dem. and Erix. One, one short moment more!

Dem. No; death lets fall
The curtain, and divides our love for ever!
[DEMETRIUS *is forced out.*

Erix. Oh, I've a darker dungeon in my soul,
Nor want an executioner to kill me.
What revolutions in the human heart
Will pity cause! What horrid deeds revenge!
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Enter ANTIGONUS, *with Attendants.*

Ant. How distant virtue dwells from mortal man!
Was't not that each man calls for others' virtue,
Her very name on earth would be forgot,
And leave the tongue, as it has left the heart!
Was ever such a laboured plan of guilt?
Take the king's mandate, to the prison fly,
Throw wide the gates, and let Demetrius know
The full detail!

Enter ERIXENE.

The princess! ha! begone! [*To the Attendants.*
While I stir up an equal transport here.
Princess, I see your griefs, and judge the cause;
But I bring news might raise you from your grave,
Or call you down from Heaven to hear with joy!
Just gods! the virtuous will at last prevail.
On motives, here too tedious to relate,
I begged the king to re-examine those,
Who came from Rome. The king approved my counsel.
Surprised, and conscious, in their charge they faultered,
And threatened tortures soon discovered all:
That Perseus bribed them to their perjuries;
That Quintius' letter was a forgery;
That prince Demetrius' intercourse with Rome
Was innocent of treason to the state.

Erix. Oh, my swoln heart! What will the gods do with me?

Ant. And to confirm this most surprising news,
Dymas, who, striving to suppress a tumult,
The rumour of Demetrius' flight had raised,
Was wounded sore, with his last breath confessed,
The prince refused his daughter; which affront
Inflamed the statesman to his prince's ruin.

Erix. Did he refuse her? [*Swoons.*

Ant. Quite o'ercome with joy,
Transported out of life.—The gods restore her!

Erix. Ah! why recall me? This is a new kind
Of murder, most severe, that dooms to life!

Ant. Fair princess, you confound me!

Erix. Am I fair?
Am I a princess? Love and empire mine?
Gay, gorgeous visions dancing in my sight!——
No, here I stand a naked, shipwrecked wretch,
Cold, trembling, pale, spent, helpless, hopeless, maid;
Cast on a shore as cruel as the waves,
O'erhung with rugged rocks, too steep to climb;
The mountain billows loud, come foaming in
Tremendous, and confound, ere they devour!

Ant. Madam, the king absolves you from your vow.

Erix. For me it matters not; but, oh! the prince——
When he had shot the gulph of his despair,
Emerging into all the light of Heaven;
His heart high-beating with well-grounded hope;
Then to make shipwreck of his happiness,

Like a poor wretch that has escaped the storm,
And swam to what he deems an happy isle,
When, lo! the savage natives drink his blood!
Ah! why is vengeance sweet to woman's pride,
As rapture to her lover? It has undone me!

Del. Madam, he comes.

Erix. Leave us, Antigonus.

Ant. What dreadful secret's this?—But I'll obey,
Invoke the gods, and leave the rest to fate.
[*Exit.*

Erix. How terribly triumphant comes the wretch!
He comes, like flowers ambrosial, early born,
To meet the blast, and perish in the storm!

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. After an age of absence in one hour,
Have I then found thee, thou celestial maid!
Like a fair Venus in a stormy sea,
Or a bright goddess, through the shades of night,
Dropt from the stars to these blest arms again?
How exquisite is pleasure after pain!
Why throbs my heart so turbulently strong,
Pained at thy presence, through redundant joy,
Like a poor miser, beggared by his store?

Erix. Demetrius, joy and sorrow dwell too near.

Dem. Talk not of sorrow, lest the gods resent,
As underprized, so loud a call to joy.
I live, I love, am loved, I have her here!
Rapture in present, and, in prospect, more!
No rival, no destroyer, no despair!
For jealousies, for partings, groans, and death,
A train of joys, the gods alone can name!
When Heaven descends in blessings so profuse,
So sudden, so surpassing hope's extreme,
Like the sun bursting from the midnight gloom,
'Tis impious to be niggards in delight;
Joy becomes duty; Heaven calls for some excess,
And transport flames as incense to the skies.

Erix. Transport how dreadful!

Dem. Turns Erixene?
Can she not bear the sunshine of our fate?
Meridian happiness is poured around us;
The laughing loves descend in swarms upon us;
And where we tread is an eternal spring!
By heaven, I almost pity guilty Perseus
For such a loss.

Erix. That stabs me through and through!

Dem. What stabs thee?—Speak! Have I then lost thy love?

Erix. To my confusion, be it spoke—'tis thine.

Dem. To thy confusion! Is it then a crime?
You heard how dying Dymas cleared my fame.

Erix. I heard, and trembled! heard, and ran distracted!

Dem. Astonishment!

Erix. I've nothing else to give thee.
[*He steps back in astonishment; she in agony; and both are silent for some time.*
He is struck dumb;—nor can I speak—yet must I.
I tremble on the brink; yet must plunge in!
Know, my Demetrius, joys are for the gods;
Man's common course of nature is distress:
His joys are prodigies; and, like them too,
Portend approaching ill. The wise man starts,
And trembles at the perils of a bliss.
To hope, how bold! how daring to be fond,
When, what our fondness grasps, is not immortal!
I will presume on thy known, steady virtue,
And treat thee like a man; I will, Demetrius,
Nor longer in my bosom hide a brand,
That burns unseen, and drinks my vital blood.

Dem. What mystery?

Erix. The blackest!

Dem. How every terror doubles in the dark!
Why muffled up in silence stands my fate?
This horrid spectre let me see at once,
And shew if I'm a man.

Erix. It calls for more.

Dem. It calls for me then; love has made me more.

Erix. Oh, fortify thy soul with more than love
To hear, what, heard, thou'lt curse the tongue that tells thee!

Dem. Curse whom? Curse thee!

Erix. Yes, from thy inmost soul.
Why dost thou lift thy eyes and hands to heaven?
The powers, most conscious of this deed, reside
In darkness, howl below in raging fires,
Where pangs, like mine, corrode them. Thence arise,
Black gods of execration and despair!
Through dreadful earthquakes cleave your upward way,
While nature shakes, and vapours blot the sun;
Then, through these horrors, in loud groans, proclaim,
That I am——

Dem. What?—I'll have it, though it blast me!

Erix. Thus, then, in thunder—I am Perseus' wife!

[DEMETRIUS *staggers—And falls after a pause——*

Dem. In thunder!—No; that had not struck so deep!
What tempest e'er discharged so fierce a fire?
Calm and deliberate anguish feeds upon me;
Each thought sent out for help brings in new woe!
Where shall I turn? Where fly? To whom but thee, [*Kneeling.*
Tremendous Jove! whom mortals will not know
From blessing, but compel to be severe!
I feel thy vengeance, and adore thy power;
I see my failings, and absolve thy rage.
But, oh! I must perceive the load that's on me;
I can't but tremble underneath the stroke.
Aid me to bear!—But since it can't be borne,
Oh, let thy mercy burst in flames upon me!
Thy triple bolt is healing balm to this;
This pain unfelt, unfancied by the wretch,
The groaning wretch, that on the wheel expires!

Erix. Why did I tell thee?

Dem. Why commit a deed,

Too shocking to be told? What fumes of hell
Flew to thy brain? What fiend the crime inspired!
Erix. Perseus, last night, as soon as thou wast fled,
At that dead hour, when good men are at rest,
When every crime and horror is abroad,
Graves yawn, fiends yell, wolves howl, and ravens scream;
Than ravens, wolves, or fiends, more fatal far,
To me he came, and threw him at my feet,
And wept, and swore unless I gave consent
To call a priest that moment, all was ruined;
That the next day Demetrius and his powers
Might conquer, he lose me, and I my crown,
Conferred by Philip but on Perseus' wife.
I started, trembled, fainted: he invades
My half-recovered strength, bribed priests conspire,
All urge my vow, all seize my ravished hand,
Invoke the gods, run o'er the hasty rite,
While each ill omen of the sky flew o'er us,
And furies howled our nuptial song below.——
Canst thou forgive?
Dem. By all the flames of love,
And torments of despair, I never can!
The furies toss their torches from thy hand,
And all their adders hiss around thy head!
I'll see thy face no more. [*Going.*
Erix. Thy rage is just.
Yet stay and hear me!
[*She kneels, and holds him.*
Dem. I have heard too much.
Erix. Till thou hast heard the whole, O do not curse me!
Dem. Where can I find a curse to reach thy crime?
Erix. Mercy! [*Weeping.*
Dem. [*Aside.*] Her tears, like drops of molten lead,
With torment burn their passage to my heart!
And yet such violation of her vows——
Erix. Mercy!
Dem. Perseus!—— [*Stamping.*
Erix. Stamp till the centre shakes,
So black a dæmon shalt thou never raise!
Perseus! Canst thou abhor him more than I?
Hell has its furies, Perseus has his love,
And, oh! Demetrius his eternal hate!
Dem. Eternal! Yes, eternal and eternal;
As deep and everlasting as my pain!
Erix. Some god descend, and sooth his soul to peace!
Dem. Talk'st thou of peace? what peace hast thou bestowed?
A brain distracted, and a broken heart.
Talk'st thou of peace? Hark, hark, thy husband calls,
His father's rebel! Brother's murderer!
Nature's abhorrence, and—thy lawful lord!
Fly, my kind patroness, and in his bosom
Consult my peace.
Erix. I never shall be there.
My lord! my life!
Dem. How say'st? Is Perseus here?——
Fly, fly! away! 'tis death! 'tis incest!
[*Starting wide, and looking round him.*
Dar'st thou to touch Demetrius? Dar'st thou touch him,
Ev'n with thine eye?
[*As he is going, she lays hold of his robe.*
Erix. I dare—and more, dare seize,
And fix him here; no doubt, to thy surprise:
I'm blemished, not abandoned; honour still
Is sacred in my sight. Thou call'st it incest:
'Tis innocence, 'tis virtue; if there's virtue
In fixed, inviolable strength of love.
For know, the moment the dark deed was done,
The moment madness made me Perseus' wife,
I seized this friend, and lodged him in my bosom,
[*Shewing a dagger.*
Firmly resolved I never would be more:
And now I fling me at thy feet, imploring
Thy steadier hand to guide him to my heart.
Who wed in vengeance, wed not but to die.
Dem. Has Perseus, then, an hymeneal claim?
And no divorce, but death?—And death from me,
Who should defend thee from the world in arms!
O thou still excellent! still most beloved!
Erix. Life is the foe, that parts us; death, a friend,
All knots dissolving, joins us; and for ever.
Why so disordered? wherefore shakes thy frame?
Look on me; do I tremble? am I pale?
When I let loose a sigh, I'll pardon thine.
Take my example, and be bravely wretched.
True grandeur rises from surmounted ills;
The wretched only can be truly great.
If not in kindness, yet, in vengeance, strike!
'Tis not Erixene, 'tis Perseus' wife.
Thou'lt not resign me?
Dem. Not to Jove.
Erix. Then strike!
Dem. How can I strike?
[*Gazing on her with astonishment.*
Stab at the face of Heaven?
How can I strike? Yet how can I forbear?
I feel a thousand deaths debating one.
A deity stands guard on every charm,
And strikes at me.
Erix. As will thy brother soon;
He's now in arms, and may be here this hour.
Nothing so cruel as too soft a soul;
This is strange tenderness, that breaks my heart;
Strange tenderness, that dooms to double death—
To Perseus.
Dem. True—but how to shun that horror!
By wounding thee, whom savage pards would spare,
My heart's inhabitant, my soul's ambition!
By wounding thee, and bathing in thy blood,
That blood illustrious, through a radiant race
Of kings and heroes, rolling down from gods!
Erix. Heroes, and kings, and gods themselves, must yield
To dire necessity.
Dem. Since that absolves me,
Stand firm and fair!

Erix. My bosom meets the point,
Than Perseus far more welcome to my breast.
Dem. Necessity, for gods themselves too strong,
Is weaker than thy charms. [*Drops the dagger.*
Erix. Oh, my Demetrius!
[*Turns, and goes to a farther part of the stage.*
Dem. Oh, my Erixene!
[*Both silent, weep, and tremble.*
Erix. Farewell! [*Going.*
Dem. Where goest! [*Passionately seizing her.*
Erix. To seek a friend.
Dem. He's here.
Erix. Yes, Perseus' friend———
Earth, open and receive me!
Dem. Heaven strike us dead,
And save me from a double suicide,
And one of tenfold death.—O Jove! O Jove!
[*Falling on his knees.*
But I'm distracted. [*Suddenly starting up.*
What can Jove? Why pray?
What can I pray for?
Erix. For a heart.
Dem. Yes, one,
That cannot feel. Mine bleeds at every vein.
Who never loved, ne'er suffered; he feels nothing,
Who nothing feels but for himself alone;
And, when we feel for others, reason reels,
O'erloaded, from her path, and man runs mad.
As love alone can exquisitely bless,
Love only feels the marvellous of pain;
Opens new veins of torture in the soul,
And wakes the nerve, where agonies are born.
E'en Dymas, Perseus, (hearts of adamant!)
Might weep these torments of their mortal foe.
Erix. Shall I be less compassionate than they?
[*Takes up the dagger.*
What love denied, thine agonies have done,
[*Stabs herself.*
Demetrius' sigh outstings the dart of death.

Enter the King, &c.

King. Give my Demetrius to my arms; I call him
To life from death, to transport from despair.
Dem. See Perseus' wife! [*Pointing at Erix.* let Delia tell the rest.
King. My grief-accustomed heart can guess too well.
Dem. That sight turns all to guilt, but tears and death.
King. Death! Who shall quell false Perseus, now in arms?
Who pour my tempest on the capitol?
How shall I sweeten life to thy sad spirit?——
I'll quit my throne this hour, and thou shalt reign.
Dem. You recommend that death, you would dissuade;
Ennobled thus by fame and empire lost,
As well as life! Small sacrifice to love.
[*Going to stab himself, the king runs to prevent him; but too late.*
King. Ah, hold! nor strike thy dagger through my heart!
Dem. 'Tis my first disobedience, and my last.
[*Falls.*
King. There Philip fell! There Macedon expired!
I see the Roman eagle hovering o'er us,
And the shaft broke, should bring her to the ground. [*Pointing to* DEMETRIUS.
Dem. Hear, good Antigonus, my last request:
Tell Perseus, if he'll sheath his impious sword
Drawn on his father, I'll forgive him all;
Though poor Erixene lies bleeding by:
Her blood cries vengeance; but my father's——
peace—— [*Dies.*
King. As much his goodness wounds me, as his death.
What then are both? O Philip, once renowned!
Where is the pride of Greece, the dread of Rome,
The theme of Athens, the wide world's example,
And the god Alexander's rival, now?
Even at the foot of fortune's precipice,
Where the slave's sigh wafts pity to the prince,
And his omnipotence cries out for more!
Ant. As the swoln column of ascending smoke,
So solid swells thy grandeur, pigmy man!
King. My life's deep tragedy was planned with art,
From scene to scene, advancing in distress,
Through a sad series, to this dire result;
As if the Thracian queen conducted all,
And wrote the moral in her children's blood;
Which seas might labour to wash out in vain.
Hear it, ye nations! distant ages, hear,
And learn the dread decrees of Jove to fear!
His dread decrees the strictest balance keep;
The father groans who made a mother weep;
But if no terror for yourselves can move,
Tremble, ye parents, for the child ye love;
For your Demetrius: mine is doomed to bleed,
A guiltless victim, for his father's deed.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

AN epilogue, through custom, is your right,
But ne'er, perhaps, was needful till this night;
To-night the virtuous falls, the guilty flies,
Guilt's dreadful close our narrow scene denies.
In history's authentic record read
What ample vengeance gluts Demetrius' shade:
Vengeance so great, that when his tale is told,
With pity some even Perseus may behold.

Perseus surviv'd, indeed, and fill'd the throne;
But ceaseless cares in conquest made him groan.
Nor reign'd he long; from Rome swift thunder flew,
And headlong from his throne the tyrant threw:
Thrown headlong down, by Rome in triumph led,
For this night's deed, his perjur'd bosom bled.
His brother's ghost each moment made him start,
And all his father's anguish rent his heart.
When rob'd in black his children round him hung,
And their rais'd arms in early sorrows wrung;
The younger smil'd, unconscious of their woe,
At which thy tears, O Rome! began to flow,
So sad the scene: what then must Perseus feel,
To see Jove's race attend the victor's wheel:
To see the slaves of his worst foes increase,
From such a source!——an emperor's embrace!
He sicken'd soon to death, and, what is worse,
He well deserv'd and felt the coward's curse;
Unpitied, scorned, insulted his last hour,
Far, far from home, and in a vassal's power:
His pale cheek rested on his shameful chain,
No friend to mourn, no flatterer to feign.
No suit retards, no comfort sooths his doom,
And not one tear bedews a monarch's tomb.
Nor ends it thus—dire vengeance to complete,
His ancient empire, falling, shares his fate.
His throne forgot!—his weeping country chain'd!
And nations ask—Where Alexander reign'd?
As public woes a prince's crimes pursue,
So public blessings are his virtues' due.
Shout, Britons, shout! auspicious fortune bless,
And cry, long live—our title to success!

MARIAMNE.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY

ELIJAH FENTON.

PROLOGUE.

WHEN breathing statues mould'ring waste away,
And tombs, unfaithful to their trust, decay,
The muse recalls the suffering good to fame,
Or wakes the prosp'rous villain into shame:
To the stern tyrant gives fictitious pow'r,
To reign the restless monarch of an hour.
Obedient to her call, this night appears
Great Herod rising from a length of years;
A name enlarg'd with titles not his own,
Servile to mount, and savage on the throne:
Whose bold ambition trembling Jewry view'd,
In blood of half her royal race imbru'd.
But now reviving in the British scene,
He looks majestic with a milder mien:
His features soften'd with the deep distress
Of love, made greatly wretched by excess!
From lust of pow'r to jealous fury tost,
We shew the tyrant in the lover lost.
If no compassion, when his crimes are weigh'd,
To his ill-fated fondness must be paid,
Yet see, ye fair! and see with pitying eyes,
The bright afflicted Mariamne rise.
No fancied tale our op'ning scenes disclose,
Historic truth, and swell with real woes.
Awful in virtuous grief the queen appears,
And strong the eloquence of royal tears.
Then let her fate your kind attention raise,
Whose perfect charms were but her second praise:
Beauty and virtue your protection claim;
Give tears to beauty, and to virtue fame.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

HEROD *the Great.*
His Young Son.
PHERORAS, *the King's Brother.*
SOHEMUS, *first Minister.*
NARBAL, *a Lord of the Queen's Party.*
HAZEROTH, *a young Lord related to the Queen.*
High-Priest.
SAMEAS, *the King's Cup-bearer.*
FLAMINIUS, *a Roman General.*

WOMEN.

MARIAMNE.
SALOME, *the King's Sister.*
ARSINOE, *chief Attendant on the Queen.*

Guards, Messengers, Attendants.

SCENE,—*A Room of State in Herod's Palace at Jerusalem.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter PHERORAS, NARBAL, *and* SOHEMUS.

Pher. The morning in her richest purple rob'd,
Smiles with auspicious lustre on the day,
Which brings my royal brother back from Rhodes,
Confirm'd in empire by the general voice
Of Cæsar, and the senate.

Nar. This blest day
In latest annals shall distinguish'd shine,
Sacred to majesty, and dear to love:
The same which saw the royal lovers march
In nuptial pomp, revolving, now restores
Herod to Mariamne, and his crown.

Soh. Fortune at length to merit grows a friend,
Or fate ordain'd the happiest stars to shed
Their influence on his birth: or sure, since Rome,
With civil discord rent, so oft hath chang'd
Her own great lords, (as bleeding conquest rais'd,
Or sunk the doubtful balance,) we had shar'd
The same vicissitudes of restless pow'r.

Nar. Herod avow'd the dear respect he bore
To Antony, and dropp'd a generous tear
To grace his ruins.

Pher. Yes, and Cæsar sat
Pensive and silent; in his anxious breast
Perhaps revolving, that of all his train,
Who proudly wanton in his mounted rays,
Gay flutt'ring insects of a summer noon,
How few would bear the wintry storms of fate!
At length he smiling rose, receiv'd the crown
From Herod's hand, and plac'd it on his brow;
Crying, shine there! for Cæsar cannot find
A worthier head to wear thee.

Soh. From the grace
Of such a victor to receive a crown,
With such peculiar attributes of fame,
Confers more glory than a chronicle
Of scepter'd ancestors.

Pher. Narbal, your care
Will see due honours to the day discharg'd.
Let the shrill trumpet's cheerful note enjoin
A general feast, and joy with loud acclaim
Through all the streets of Solyma resound:
Let steams of grateful incense cloud the sky,
'Till the rich fragrance reach the utmost bounds
Of Herod's empire: let each smiling brow
Wear peaceful olive, whilst the virgin choirs
Warbling his praise, his paths with flow'rs perfume,
Who guards Judæa with the shield of Rome.

[*Exit.* NAR.

SCENE II.

PHERORAS *and* SOHEMUS.

Soh. My lord, the province you've assign'd agrees
With Narbal's talents; none is better form'd
To gild the pageant of a gaudy day:
He's nobly born, and popularly vain,
Rare tinsel-stuff t'adorn a room of state!
But in the council, where the public care——

Pher. In that high sphere you, Sohemus, alone
Must ever shine: and may your wisdom raise
Your master's fortune, to divide the globe
With this new Cæsar; and no longer sway
A short precarious sceptre, which must shake
With each tempestuous gust that blows from Rome.

Soh. With blushes I must hear you call me wise,
When one impassion'd woman can destroy
My surest plans, and with a sigh blow down
The firmest fabric of deliberate thought.
Heav'ns! that a king consummate for a throne,
So wise in council, and so great in arms,
Should, after nine long years, remain a slave,
Because his wife is fair! What art thou, beauty,
Whose charm makes sense and valour grow as tame
As a blind turtle?

Pher. Is thy wisdom proof
Against the blandishments of warm desire?
It ill defends thee from Arsinoe's charms!
The sullen sweetness of a down-cast eye,
A feign'd unkindness, or a just reproach,
Breath'd in a sigh, and soften'd with a tear,
Would make thy rigid marble melt like snow
On the warm bosom of the youthful spring.

Soh. In thoughtless youth, gay nature gives the rein
To love, and bids him urge the full career:
But Herod should restrain his head-strong course,
Now reason is mature.

Pher. He never can;
For Mariamne with superior charms
Triumphs o'er reason; in her look she bears
A paradise of ever-blooming sweets:
Fair as the first idea beauty prints
On the young lover's soul: a winning grace
Guides every gesture, and obsequious love
Attends on all her steps; for, majesty
Streams from her eye to each beholder's heart,
And checks the transport which her charms inspire:
Who would not live her slave!—Nor is her mind
Form'd with inferior elegance!—By her,
So absolute in every grace, we guess
What essence angels have.

Soh. Who can admire
The brightest angel, when his hand unsheaths
The vengeful sword, or with dire pestilence
Unpeoples nations? If death sits enthron'd
In the soft dimple of a damask cheek,
He thence can aim his silent dart as sure,
As from the wrinkle of a tyrant's frown:

And that's our case! Yet with a lover's eye
You view the gay malignance, that will blast
Both you and all your friends.
Pher. We sure may praise
The snake that glitters in her summer pride,
And yet beware the sting.
Soh. But low in dust
Crush the crown'd basilisk, or else she kills
Whate'er her eye commands.—You need, my lord,
No clearer light than this, by which to read
The purpose of my soul.
Pher. Though 'tis obscure,
It strikes like lightning that with fear confounds
The pale night-wanderer, whilst it shews the path.
You, Sohemus, have cause to think the queen
Charges the taking off her uncle's head
To your advice; and gladly would atone
Her kindred blood with yours: revenge still glows,
Though hid in treacherous embers; and you'll feel
The dire effect, whene'er occasion breathes
A gale to waken and foment the flame.
But I, unpractis'd in th' intrigues of courts,
And disciplin'd in camps, will not supply
Increase of fuel to these home-bred jars:
I hope the king will see them soon supprest;
Or care succeeding care will ever tread
The circle of his crown.
Soh. If to pursue
The safest measure to secure his throne,
Shall irritate the queen to make me fall
A victim to her rage, the conscious pride
Of having acted what the king ordained,

Enter Messenger with a Letter to PHERORAS.

Will yet support me. 'Tis not worth my care,
Whether the trembling hand of age must shake
From the frail glass my last remaining sand;
Or fortune break the phial, ere the sum
Of half my life is told.
Pher. 'Tis from the king:
A most unpleasing message for the queen.
Soh. May I, my lord, partake?
Phar. The infant prince
Must live an hostage of the league at Rome;
Cæsar hath sent a minister of trust
With guards to wait him. This perhaps the king
Hath kept concealed, that his return might calm
The afflicted queen, and soften the surprise.
Soh. Names he, my lord, the general to whose care
The prince must be consigned?
Pher. Rome could not chuse
For that high charge a nobler delegate,
Than my Flaminius; for a bolder hand
Ne'er flew her conquering eagles at their prey.
We in the Parthian wars together learned
The rudiments of arms; the summer sun
Hath seen our marches measured by his own;
In battle so intrepid, that he shewed
An appetite of danger; oft I've heard
The weary veterans, resting on their spears,
Swear by the gods and majesty of Rome,
They blushed with indignation to behold
The garland of the war, by partial fate
Transferr'd from theirs, to grace a stripling's brow——
But I with Narbal will prevail, to impart
This most ungrateful order to the queen.
[*Exit* PHER.

SCENE III.

SALOME *enters to* SOHEMUS.

Sal. I hope, my lord, young Hazeroth's affront
Will not pass unresented.
Soh. I've dispatched
A message to the king: the account I gave
Imported nothing but severest truth;
Yet wittiest malice scarce could feign a roll
Of keener calumnies.
Sal. He mentioned me?
Soh. Traduced you basely, by the opprobrious name
Of Idumæan spinster, in degree
The third descendant of an heathen slave,
Who kept Apollo's temple.
Sal. The king's veins
Hold the same blood, whatever is the source;
And if the wretch survives that vile reproach,
The king's a slave indeed. What was your crime?
Soh. He said by my sole counsels were destroyed
All of the royal Asmonæan race,
Whom justice made the victims of the state:
Whose injured, discontented ghosts too long
Had cried revenge, but should not cry in vain:
Then half unsheathed his sabre.
Sal. That vain boy
Believes his near relation to the queen
Exempts his haughty youth from all restraint.
He's Mariamne's echo, and repeats
But half her menaces.
Soh. What time more fit
To put her threats in act, than when the king
Flies with redoubled ardour to her arms?
Passion improves with absence; and his heart
So soft and passive to the power of love,
Will then be vacant only to his queen.—
Fortune of late a glorious scene disclos'd,
But soon snatch'd back the visionary joy!
The blissful hour is past——Curst, doubly curst
Be this boy-emperor! who tamely spar'd
The warmest friend that Antony could boast.
Had Herod perish'd by his vengeful sword,
I soon had sent (for so he left in charge)
His queen, the worshipp'd idol of his soul,
To attend him to the shades.—Clouds of despair
Now terminate our view!
Sal. Can you discern
No glimmering hope? Though dim, the distant ray
May serve to steer our course.
Soh. The king will send
His son for hostage, to reside in Rome.
Sal. Were triple thunder vollied at the queen
It could not rend her bleeding bosom more
Than such a message.
Soh. At this little spark,

Discord may light her ever-burning torch:
The imperious queen perhaps will edge her tongue,
With keen resentments for her ruined race.
For 'tis the infirmity of noblest minds,
When ruffled with an unexpected woe,
To speak what settled prudence would conceal:
As the vexed ocean, working in a storm,
Oft brings to light the wrecks, which long lay calm
In the dark bosom of the secret deep.
From such reproach, his promised joy may change
To coldness and distrust, perhaps to hate;
And their high souls, that now, like friendly stars,
Mingling their beams, in mutual ardour shine,
In fiercest opposition then will thwart
Each other's influence, and divide the court:
Then, mischief, to thy work!—

Sal. In me you'll find
A sure assistant. Shall Pheroras join?

Soh. I'd fly him at the quarry, but I fear
He'd check, if other game should cross the flight:
He scorns dissimulation, nor perceives
That nature never meant simplicity
A grace to charm in courts: he serves the crown
With such a blind disinterested zeal,
He's even proud to obey.

Sal. Let him enjoy
His cold-complexioned principles, and fall
A traitor to himself.

Soh. O princess! born
To bless the world with a long progeny
Of future heroes; and renew the strain
Of valour, which the softness of your sex
Unspirited at first! So great a soul
Deserves, and sure is destined to a throne!
But hark!—

Sal. The queen's approaching: she repairs
To sacrifice.

Soh. 'Tis best we both retire. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

MARIAMNE *and* ARSINOE.

Mar. The princess and her friend were unprepared
To pay the decencies the day requires:
The most unpractis'd in the courtier's art,
And they who hate us most, might sure vouchsafe
A smooth unmeaning compliment at least.
But night-born treason is too tender-ey'd,
To bear the blaze of dazzling majesty,
And seeks the guilty shade.

Arsi. They're both deprived
Of your propitious smile; so dire a loss
Would cloud the most serene.

Mar. That sullen gloom
Proceeds not from a conscience of their crimes
Which sues by penitence for royal grace;
But argues high contempt; their brows display
A banner of defiance, and avow
Their trait'rous combination: but I'll quell
The towering crest of their presumptuous hate,
Or perish in the attempt. Henceforth forbear
All commerce with the princess, and her train,
For fear the infection of example taint
Your sound allegiance.

Arsi. If a single thought
Were tinctured with disloyalty, this hand
Should pierce my heart to drive the rebel out.
Your strict command with pleasure I obey;
For at the sight of Salome, my breast
Shivers with chilling horror, and revolves
The destiny which a Chaldæan seer
Of late foretold. The pious sage had pass'd
Full sixty winters in a private cell:
His locks were silvered o'er with reverend white;
And on his cheeks appeared the pale effect
Of studious abstinence: his custom was
In his small hermitage to outwatch the moon,
To marshal in his schemes the host of heaven;
And from their ruling influence at the birth,
Formed his predictions. As the princess pass'd,
I asked him if his foresight could discern
The colour of her fate: he answered, black!
'Tis black chequered with blood! deep in her breast
I see the dagger, doomed by heaven's decree
To cut her half-spun thread.

Mar. What powerful cause
Urged you to hear a vain diviner tell
His waking dreams? Perhaps you went to know
What happy star presided o'er the love,
Which Sohemus, I hear, addressed to you:
If so, I'll be your oracle; forbear
To enquire the doubtful omens of the sky,
And fix your faith on this unerring truth:
If your ill-judging choice mislead your heart,
To meet his passion with an equal flame,
Henceforth forever banished from my sight,
In exile you shall end an odious life;
Attended only in that friendless state
By black remorse, which step by step pursues
The ungrateful and the false.

Arsi. I long have felt
The afflicting hand of heaven, without the guilt
Of murmur or complaint: but to be thought
False and ungrateful, is too much to bear.
Chase that suspicion from your royal mind;
Nor cast my blameless innocence a prey
To those who envy your distinguished grace,
With which I've long been honoured.

Mar. To receive
Private addresses from my deadliest foe;
A wretch, whose dark infernal arts have wrought
The ruin of my race, but ill repays
My condescending favour, which vouchsafed
To lose the style of subject and of queen,
In friendship's softer name.

Arsi. While thus I kneel,
Imploring heaven to attest my spotless faith,
May I be fixed a dreadful monument
Of perjured guilt, if e'er my bosom gave
Reception to his suit. Were he possessed
Of all the sun surveys, and formed to please
With every grace that captivates the soul;
And your command, concurrent with his love,
Should urge me to comply; that hard command,
And that alone I dare to disobey.——
No, my dear Roman! nothing can deface
Thy image from thy virgin-widow's breast;

The inviolable band of strong desire
Shall ever join our souls.
Mar. Dismiss your fears,
And let them with my vanish'd doubt expire:
But, whence this transport of reviving woe?
Recite the series of your fate at large.
Arsi. When Anto y and Cæsar found the globe
Too narrow, to suffice the boundless views
Of two such mighty spirits, my virgin-vow
Was plighted to a brave patrician youth,
The friend of Cæsar. Antony proscribed
The chiefs who sided with his potent foe;
And foremost in the tablet my lov'd lord
Was doom'd to slaughter; whilst with nuptial joy
His palace rung, crowded with friends who came
To attend the bride's arrival, through the gates
A troop of cut-throats rushing in, surpris'd
And dragged him to his fate!
Mar. In that distress
What could you do, and whither did you fly?
Arsi. At Alexandria then the fatal cause
Of Antony engaged my father's sword;
Thither I fled, and was received with grace
To Cleopatra's train: with her I came
To Palestine; where the detested sight
Of Antony so rack'd me, and reviv'd
The sad remembrance of my murdered lord,
I begged to be dismissed. You then received
The fugitive, whom fortune's rage hath made
Wretched indeed, but hath not power to make
False or ungrateful.
Mar. Poor Arsinoe!
My favours shall deface the memory
Of past afflictions. On a soul secure
In native innocence, or grief or joy
Should make no deeper prints than air retains;
Where fleet alike the vulture and the dove,
And leave no trace. Blind fortune, that bestows
The perishable toys of wealth and power,
At random oft resumes them, pleased to make
A hurricane of life: but, the firm mind
Safe on exalted virtue reigns sedate,
Superior to the giddy whirls of fate. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter NARBAL *and* FLAMINIUS.

Nar. The queen will see you, sir; a just regard
To Cæsar's friendship is so sacred here,
That though on this high jubilee the court
Suspends all state affairs, the queen vouchsafes
To admit your message to her royal ear.
Fla. Th' ambassadors of Rome never demand
Admission more than once: your king defers
His entry till the queen shall execute
What Cæsar's will requires.
Nar. That cause alone
Would urge our prompt compliance; for the king
Makes love the impatient register of time:
In his account each moment seems an age,
That keeps him from his Mariamne's arms;
Who well deserves such passion.
Fla. Distant fame
Hath pictured all her graces on my mind:
Perhaps you've heard of Dellius.
Nar. What! the friend
Of Antony?
Fla. His qualities disgrace
The name of friend; but in his softer hours
He liked him for his elegance of taste
In luxury and love. I heard him tell,
How once when Antony in amorous pomp
With Cleopatra sailed along the Nile,
To grieve the proud Egyptian, he produced
A miniature of Mariamne's face.
Nar. And what said Antony?
Fla. With vast surprise
He viewed each lineament, but yet forbore
To praise or blame it, which he knew the queen
Would soon interpret love; but softly sighed,
And slipt it in his bosom. Strait her cheeks
Glowed with an angry blush, which faded soon,
And left them lily pale. Breathless and faint
She then reclined her head, and from his breast
Snatch'd what she fear'd might lie too near his heart:
With amorous reluctance while he strove
To gain the ravish'd prize, she let it fall
(More by design than chance) into the Nile:
He springing up to catch it, half-o'er-set
The gilded barge; and with a sterner brow,
And haughtier tone, than e'er she knew before,
He cried, your river is too well repaid,
For all the wealth you owed.—
[*A messenger enters to* NAR.
Mess. Pheroras, sir,
Desires to see the Roman general.
Nar. Sir, I'll conduct you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter SOHEMUS *and the High-Priest.*

Soh. But the human mind,
When 'tis divorced from matter, cannot pierce
The distant cloud of dark futurity.
You sleep not sound, my lord! Old age depress'd
With melancholy damps, oft dwindles down
To second infancy, and then renews
Its cradle dreams; which superstitious fear
Makes sacred with the venerable names
Of vision, or of prophecy; devis'd
To cheat the vulgar, and too oft employed
To cover disaffection to the state.
High-Pr. I have, my lord, no craving appetites
To glut with gain or titles; I've attained

The highest name my order can receive.
I bear no symptoms of a feverish soul,
Which, turbulent with guilt, aspires to embroil
The state with trait'rous fiction: You may think,
I who commend myself, have bribed a fool
To be my herald; yet a modest man,
To oppose the darts of calumny, may wear
His innocence in sight; a safer shield
Than adamant, or gold!

Soh. Your innocence!
Did you not talk of omens, which forebode
The impending wrath of heaven to blast the day
Which reinstates our monarch on his throne?

High-Pr. I did, my lord, and will affirm I saw—
Laugh when you've heard me out.

Soh. Well, pray proceed!

High-Pr. I walk'd this morning in my palmy grove,
Where oft to contemplation I devote
My earliest hours; the sun, new-rising, cheer'd
The face of nature with a purple smile;
My spirits ran as brisk careers of life,
As ever in the careless prime of youth;
When issuing sudden from the bow'ry shade
A beauteous form appeared, and gliding slow,
Approached me with a soft dejected air;
Then cried, I liv'd the brother of your queen;
And gave a piteous groan!

Soh. Aristobulus?

High-Pr. The same, I knew him well.

Soh. Ha!——What?——What more?—
Why, he was drowned, you know——Could I prevent
What heaven fore-doom'd? My good lord, did he say
That I was accessary? Why to me
This message from the unapparent shades?
Speak———speak———I'll hear it.

High-Pr. In his hand he wav'd
An airy streamer, like a sable shroud,
And thus went on: If dire designs prevail,
Before yon east displays another dawn,
My sister must exchange her robes of state,
For such a weed as this; by wicked arts
Betrayed, and in the summer of her days
Cut off by bloody hands! with her will end
The glories of our Asmonæan line!
Tell what I say to Sohemus alone,
Bid him desist.

Soh. I!———what?

High-Pr. He said no more,
But vanish'd from my view.

Soh. 'Tis best, my lord,
To let such shadows fleet neglected by;
They argue perturbation in the brain,
Caus'd by black humours; a few hours will prove
That mimic fancy mock'd your dazzled sight,
With images of air.

High-Pr. Whate'er they prove,
I feel my bosom lighter. [*Exit High-Pr.*

Soh. Thou hast laid
A galling weight on mine.

SCENE III.

SALOME *enters to* SOHEMUS.

Sal. How now, my lord!
What means this pale confusion in your face?
What makes your hair stand bristling, and your eyes
With gloomy horror glare?

Soh. We cheat the world
With florid outside, till we meet surprise;
Then conscience, working inward like a mole,
Crumbles the surface, and reveals the dirt
From which our actions spring.

Sal. My lord, recall
Your wandering reason.

Soh. 'Tis in vain to boast
That reason o'er the passions holds the rein,
When, quite unmann'd with such a tale———

Sal. What tale?
I met th' high-priest, hath he unfolded aught
That strikes with this amazement?

Soh. He reports
A message from the visionary shade
Of young Aristobulus; him, who claim'd
By lineal right the crown which Herod wears;
To disembroil the title, whilst he bath'd,
I plung'd him 'till the stifling element
Had quench'd the lamp of life, and charg'd the crime
On faultless destiny.—What makes you smile?

Sal. To see a dotard's fiction, or his dream,
A legend, such as nurseries amuse
A froward child with, have as strong effect
As plain authentic truth! I've heard you prove,
By clearest reason, that when death resolves
To its first principles the human frame,
That subtle vapour then, the boasted soul,
Mingles with common air.

Soh. 'Tis not the faith
Of such fantastic forms that quells me thus;
Sudden remorse for murder'd innocence
Wither'd my resolution.

Sal. But revenge
Reviving warmth and spirit will infuse,
And make the drooping branches flourish fair,
Renew'd in second spring. Here Sameas comes,
Whom art and nature exquisitely form
For glorious mischief; him we must secure.

SCENE IV.

SALOME, SOHEMUS, *and* SAMEAS.

Sal. Sameas, I'm pleas'd your merits are preferr'd
To bear the royal cup; Pheroras long
Pleaded in vain for Mariamne's grace.

Sam. If to her grace I ow'd this vital air,
I'd choak myself with generous disdain,
Rather than breathe it: from Pheroras' suit
I date my fortunes, and to him devote
Life, conscience, honour.

Soh. Gratitude is rare!
Most, after favours are conferr'd, profess
Deep sense of obligation; but when prov'd,

In points of nicest moment, have recourse
To conscience, honour, and such trivial phrase,
T' excuse defect of duty to their friend:
But such a pure, resign'd, implicit zeal,
Excites my wonder, and transcends my praise.
Sam. Pheroras said, my lord, he'd recommend
To you my poor affairs.
Soh. Doubt not my care;
Read, hear thy lot. [*Pulls out his tablets.*
Sam. Make Sameas chamberlain———
How can I e'er discharge so vast a debt
Of gratitude!
Soh. How? Should affairs require
Thy hand, it would not shrink to cut a throat?
Sam. I've such a strong antipathy to blood
I ne'er could sacrifice: but my revenge
Works a more secret, and a safer way.
No poisonous herbs, which various climes produce,
No venom of the mine, nor reptile, 'scapes
My curious observation: I extract
Their several essences, and know their pow'rs
And times of operation.
Soh. To what use?
Had I a dog to be dispatch'd——
Sam. My art
Delights in nobler quarry.
Soh. Is it staunch?
Sam. Point out the game, my lord, you'll find I dare
Do more, than most dare think.
Soh. Then swear———
Sal. Defer
T' impart your orders till the king's arriv'd;
And meet before the banquet.
Sam. What your will
Enjoins, my duty binds me to perform.
Soh. Proud queen! the last decisive hour draws on,
Destin'd to crown our hope, and end our care:
Aided by this brave friend, whose soul is steel'd
With dauntless resolution, though the ghosts
Of all her race rise grinning from the tomb,
And in their cause auxiliar furies join,
Intrepid we'll pursue our bold career,
Pitch the sure toils, and rouse the fated deer.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

MARIAMNE, NARBAL, *and* ARSINOE.

Mar. His offspring mortgag'd to redeem his crown!——
The wild Arabians, who delight in blood,
Who live promiscuous, and without restraint
Of laws or manners, propagate their kind,
With yearning passion yet preserve their young:
Nature on their unpolish'd marble prints
Much tenderer sentiments, than some can boast
Who call them barbarous.
Nar. In the sons of kings
The country claims a right; and to preserve
The quiet, and the glory of your realm,
The king complies with Cæsar, and will send
The dearest pledge to firm his royal faith.
Mar. Hard fate of greatness, if it thus excludes
A mother's interest in the babe she bore!
Kings to their country owe their dearest care
In council or in arms; let that suffice:
The choicest blessings of indulgent heav'n,
Their children, are reserv'd a private right,
To soften and support their public toils.
But, send the prince to Rome! which still ferments
With fierce intestine factions, ever known
To sheath, but not to lay the sword aside,
I cannot bear it!——Now, the ball of power,
Which has been bandy'd long from side to side,
Is grasp'd by Cæsar: soon, superior force
May wrest it from his hand: who'll then adhere
To Cæsar's cause? Will Herod?———He, be sure,
Would plan new measures to preserve the crown;
And his desertion, doubtless, would provoke
Cæsar to punish, in extreme revenge,
Th' offending father in the guiltless son.
Nar. The blood of Julius is aton'd; and Rome,
Like a tir'd lioness, which long has stood
The hunter's spear, lies quiet in her den
To heal her wounds: Cæsar himself aspires,
With all his conquests, only to be styl'd
His country's father; and the senate bears
The same pacific temper. But, suppose
Another Brutus rouse another war,
And Tyber shine again with civil arms:
Though Herod then should draw the sword, and turn
The point on Cæsar; yet the sacred laws
Of empires would preserve the prince's life
Inviolably safe.
Mar. But, were revenge
Employ'd (as sure it would) to expound those laws;
Then, what bold casuist would appear, to oppose
The sense of Cæsar's legions? Wrong and right
In this bad age are measur'd by success:
The blackest crime from fortune's golden light
Receives a beauteous gloss—But grant him safe,
As in the circle of his mother's arms:
Rome may pervert his infant age to kneel
Before her idol-shrines, and from our law
Apostatize to worship fabled gods:
And though I hold his life and safety dear,
Far dearer than my own, I'd see him cast
Amidst her amphitheatre a prey,
Mangl'd, and quiv'ring in the famish'd jaws
Of savages, much rather than behold
His body at her heathen altars bow'd,
In impious adoration.
Nar. Leave th' event
To heaven's high care! The king must be obey'd
If you contest the terms, to which his crown
And honour stand engag'd, the vain attempt
Might only serve to lessen that excess
Of dear affection, which he bears you now.
Then Sohemus, our prime state engineer

Might see his arts succeed beyond his hope,
To achieve your fall, and make this beauteous pile
A heap of mighty ruins!
Mar. Could you feel
The strong emotions of a mother's woe,
When ravish'd from her lov'd one, who hath liv'd
Most in her sight, and ever in her soul;
Not all the wounds which fortune is impower'd
To inflict, nor instant death, would move your mind
Amid his dangers to regard your own.
Ev'n life, that dear ennobling gift of heav'n,
Which, in the order of creation, ranks
The palest glowworm's animated ray
Above the brightest star, with me will lose
Its boasted value, when I lose my child:
With him I truly liv'd; his presence crown'd
The day with pleasure, and the night with peace.
Then, breath consum'd in sighs will not deserve
The name of life! These roofs shall only sound
With moanful accents, sad as murm'ring winds,
Which through the clefts of ruin'd cloisters roar.
Such music best will please the mother's ear,
If, in a distant land, her tender son
Must weep the rigour of a foreign lord,
With no kind friend to pity or revenge
The wrong he there sustains!
Nar. I'll wait the prince,
To guard his helpless age, and share his fate:
And for a pledge of constant faith, receive
(Though much unequal, yet of dearest price
To him who gives it!) for a pledge receive
Those precious legacies which that bright saint,
My dying wife, bequeath'd me!——If the prince
Shall feel th' effects of violence or fraud;
If e'er I cease with duteous care to shield
From guilt his manners, from reproach his fame;
Or fail to banish from his pensive breast
Each anxious thought, and cherish gentle joys;
Slay both my sons!
Mar. Then go, Arsinoe, go—
Hither conduct the prince. [*Exit* AR.

SCENE VI.

MARIAMNE *and* NARBAL.

Mar. Oh happiness!
Thou gaudy bubble, which delud'st the grasp,
Whene'er we strive to keep thee most secure,
Have I been fond of fortune's faithless smile,
Cruel, disdainful, to deserve this doom?
Did e'er I suffer pride to bar my ear
Against the widow's cry? Did e'er I view
The weeping orphan's anguish, and withhold
The hand of liberal mercy from their woes?
Or did I, with uncharitable scorn,
Ever upbraid the childless womb; or wish
The wrathful blast of heav'n to attaint the fruit
Of my most deadly foe?——Whence then to me
This undeserv'd distress? Why must I bear
So deep a wound in such a tender part?
More wretched than the meanest of my sex,
Who call me queen! they lose the cares of life,
Amid the blessings of a dear increase;
A bliss deny'd to me!
Nar. When foreign foes
Are quell'd by Cæsar, and the provinces
Avow their homage to the laws of Rome,
And with consummate peace his arms are crown'd,
The prince will be restor'd; and in exchange
Some of our noblest youth will be receiv'd
For hostages of friendship.
Mar. That exchange
Will come too late to bless my longing eyes:
They'll first be clos'd in death! a thousand ills
Rise in black view to my divining soul!
[ARSINOE *enters with the prince.*
And must I lose thee!—Oh! thou sweetest pledge
Of heaven's indulgence to a mother's pray'r!
Must the sole comfort of my cares become
The cause of endless grief? alas! no more
Must I with tender transport clasp thee thus!
No more must these desiring eyes be fix'd
In silent joy, with gazing on thy charms!
Arsinoe, oh! support me—I've a son
To think on only, and to pay a tear
For every wounding thought! O Narbal!——now
Obey the king, by whom the dearer names
Of husband and of father are forgot!
Obey the king,——let the rude hand of pow'r
Tear from my breast the blossom of my joys——
Yet, let me bless him——All thy wants of me
May pitying angels with their aid supply!
Waft all thy pray'rs to heav'n! which heaven approve,
And crown with blessings of eternal love!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS *and* NARBAL.

Fla. Unhappy queen! 'till now I never griev'd
To obey my emperor.
Nar. Awhile she stood
Transform'd by grief to marble, and appear'd
Her own pale monument: but, when she breath'd
The secret anguish of her wounded soul,
So moving were the plaints, they would have sooth'd
The stooping falcon to suspend his flight,
And spare his morning prey: thus nature soon
Exhausted, spiritless, had need of art
To respite, or assuage her troubled thoughts:
Then her physicians with the opiate charm
Of gentle sleep, her fainting senses bound,

And hush'd the warring passions into peace.
Fla. Give me, ye gods! the harmony of war,
The trumpet's clangour, and the clash of arms!
That concert animates the glowing breast
To rush on death: but, when our ear is pierc'd
With the sad notes which mournful beauty yields,
Our manhood melts in sympathizing tears.
Nar. Heavens! is it just that Mariamne's fate
Claims the sad tribute of a tender tear;
She, she, whose gentle goodness strives to chase
Afflictions from mankind? I've seen her weep,
When the fierce hounds have bay'd the panting stag,
'Till the big drops roll'd from his pleading eyes;
And none dar'd let the fatal javelin fly,
Before she left the field.

SCENE II.

To them ARSINOE *enters with the Prince.*

Arsi. To you, my lord, [*To* NAR.
The queen at length resigns this royal charge,
Judæa's other hope; the dearest pledge
Of sacred faith that monarch can bestow.
Fla. Gods!—'tis not possible!—they've only form'd
Those beauties in the same celestial mold—
Exact similitude of shape and air!
Nar. What may this mean, Flaminius?
Arsi. Do I wake?
Or does deluding fancy lead me still
In new fantastic labyrinths of bliss?
Fla. The face, and harmony of voice the same!
Nar. You're lost in admiration and surprise:
Reveal the cause.
Fla. Oh, sir!——I once was blest
With such a lovely object of my flame!
Beauty and goodness in her heav'nly form
Held equal empire; oh!
Nar. What cruel fate
Sever'd your hearts, so tender, and so true,
That still the wound bleeds fresh?
Fla. The violence
Of civil discord snatch'd her from my arms:
But the last pang of death alone hath pow'r
To tear the beauteous image from my breast!
She liv'd the grace of Cleopatra's court,
And shar'd her fall!—As her high merits claim'd
My earliest love, to her I pay my last:
My passion for the sex expir'd, and lies
In dear Hortensia's tomb!
Arsi. Hortensia lives! [*She runs into his arms.*
Lives only for Flaminius—Lives to crown
Such matchless constancy!
Fla. Hath fate rejoin'd
Our long-divided hearts!—'Tis she!—I know
[*She shows her ring.*
That pledge of our espousals, where express'd,
The virgin-phœnix riseth from the flames:
Th' inscription was prophetic of thy fate,
'Another and the same.'
Arsi. But ever thine!
Will not this joy, as all my former, fleet
Like the light vapour of a morning dream?—
Fla. Rapp'd from myself, my senses are oppress'd
With rushing ecstacies: oh! I could stand
And gaze for ever on thy heav'nly charms,
In speechless transport, which too big for words
Swells in my heaving heart!
Arsi. How did you 'scape
Th' assassinates whom Antony employ'd
To take your head!
Fla. My Phædria, by the crime
Of fortune born a slave (for sure his soul
Was of the noblest order) would assume
My habit and my name; his features, age,
And stature well befriending the deceit;
And thus disguis'd his honest heart receiv'd
The wounds they meant for me.
Arsi. O wond'rous faith!
Fla. But now, for Rome, Hortensia!——
Nar. Madam, pay
The queen a last farewell, in whom you found
The kindest mistress, and the best of friends.
Arsi. I will, my lord; and—
Fla. Hark! the trumpet speaks
The king's approach, our signal to depart:
I now must leave thee, to secure the prince,
As Cæsar gave command: but near the walls
My troops are tented in the western vale;
Where, meditating on my blissful change,
I'll watch impatient for the purple dawn:
Thither you come.
Arsi. Though grinning savages
Oppos'd my speed, I'd rush intrepid on.
From clime to clime, wherever glory calls,
I'll wait my warrior; pleas'd with thee to pass
The frozen Danube, or the sun-burnt Nile:
And though my sex denies me to partake
The dangers of the field, with ardent vows
I'll beg each tutelary pow'r to spread
Protection round thee, in the cloud of war.
But if relentless to my pray'r they prove,
And thou art fated in the fight to fall,
I'll follow fast the soul of my desire,
And by the wound, that pierc'd my lord, expire.
[*Exeunt,* ARSINOE *on one side of the stage, the rest on the other.*

SCENE III.

SALOME *and* SOHEMUS.

Sal. In the high mantling tide of grief and rage,
Sure when the king arrives, her cold disdain
Will damp the glowing ardour of his soul.
Soh. Fear not a calm! The cloud will now collect
More vapours still, to give a nobler burst,
And make her ruin sure. When vulgar minds
Despond, they drop beneath the stroke of fate,
With no more tumult than autumnal leaves
Forsake the sapless bough: But, majesty
With noise and pompous horror rushes down,
As if the violence of nature tore
A planet from its orb.

SCENE IV.

To them PHERORAS *enters.*

Pher. The pomp of kings,
At their triumphal entries, moving slow
To warlike symphonies, and clashing arms,
When from the field, with bloody laurels crown'd,
They come victorious, gives a mingled joy:
For pity, when the captive train appears,
Oft with a silent pensive gloom obscures
The lustre of the triumph. But no cloud
Saddens this festival: from the white tow'r
I heard with rapture how the loyal tribes,
In mighty confluence hail'd the king's return;
So long, so loud, that floating on the sound,
The bird of heaviest wing with ease had soar'd,
Beyond the tow'ring eagle's utmost flight,
Up-born by gales of joy. [*Flourish.*
Soh. My lord, the king!——

SCENE V.

HEROD *passeth over the stage with attendants, &c. they all kneel.*

Pher. O king, for ever live! the dear defence,
And grace of Palestine.
Sal. May this blest day
Tincture with happiness, and bright renown,
All your succeeding years!
Soh. And sure there's none,
To whom this day can give sincerer joy,
Than to your faithful Sohemus; who kneels
To give this seal of delegated power
Back to your royal hand.
Her. Let all who sigh
In gloomy dungeons, prest with galling chains,
Shake off their bondage; and conspire to tune
The wholesome breath of heav'n to songs of praise.
Tell them they owe their freedom to the queen:
Her temper is compassionate and kind,
As guardian angels are: but I! constrain'd
By the sad exigence of state, have torn
Our tender offspring from her fond embrace,
And heap'd afflictions on the brightest head,
That ever wore a crown!
Pher. But your approach
Will sooth her grief, and soften the surprise.
Her. I, I, am the sole cause of all her grief!
Ambition rushing forwards, hath disturb'd
My sweetest fountain of domestic bliss!
It promis'd sceptres, but hath fill'd my grasp
With gilded thorns! wanting my queen, the court
Appears as lonesome as the dreary waste,
Where pestilence and famine, hand in hand,
Have lately reign'd: but, Mariamne's smiles
Diffusive of their good, around her cast
On all the shining circle beams of joy;
When from the wars she welcom'd my return,
With tears of tender transport in her eyes.
Such oft our meetings were; but, dismal change!
The fair offended seems to shun me now:
How shall I calm the tempest of her soul!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

The Scene opening, discovers MARIAMNE *asleep, and* ARSINOE *attending:* HEROD *enters, and goes to the queen; then comes with* ARSINOE *to the fore part of the Stage.*

Her. I kiss'd her softly, and she gave a sigh!
Tears make her cheek feel like a damask rose,
Wet with cold ev'ning dew.
Arsi. Sleep ill performs
His gentle office when constrain'd by art:
Her sudden starts, and broken murmurs shew
The discomposure of unpleasing dreams.
Her. Music shall wake her: That hath pow'r to charm
Pale sickness, and avert the stings of pain:
But, ever on the mind the sure effects
Are most conspicuous where the varied notes
Can raise or quell our passions, and becalm
In sweet oblivion the too wakeful sense
Of grief, or love; and print a dimpled smile
On the green bloodless cheek of dumb despair.
Such pow'rful strains bid harmony resound:
Such as good spirits are suppos'd to sing
O'er saints, while death dissolves the union-band,
And frees them from the fretful dream of life.
[*Exit* ARSI.
Here will I watch the day-break of her eyes:
O! may they dart warm rays of cordial love,
And wake to peace and joy!
[*Soft music is heard behind the scenes:* ARSINOE *returns to* HEROD, *who stands looking on* MARIAMNE: *after the music is ceased, she begins to speak.*
Mar. Good angels guard me!——
Murder attaints not me——
Her. Ah, gentle soul!——
Mar. The man of blood is justly doomed to bleed:
I ne'er shed any——When I was a child
I kill'd a linnet, but indeed I wept:
Heav'n visits not for that.——O! 'tis my lord!——
He's poison'd! dead! dead!—and each manly grace
Cover'd with purple spots!
Her. These frightful dreams
With their fantastic imag'ry amaze
The mind, as much as the most hideous form
Of real horror.
Arsi. Sir, she wakes.
Mar. The king!
Her. My dearest queen!——The fairest and the best
That ever bore the name!
Mar. I'm chang'd of late,
Alas! much chang'd——
Her. No, thou art still the same;
The same bright shrine where virtue dwells, to charm
Those who contemn her most.
Mar. Could I have charm'd
Ambition from your breast, I had not mourn'd
The dearest object of maternal love

Torn from this bleeding heart; where he possess'd
So large a space, that fortune is too poor,
With all her vast variety of joys,
To fill the gloomy void!——My life is spun,
At least this day, too long, which shews you chang'd,
And from a loving lord grown most unkind!
Her. Unkind!——Your fancy cannot form a wish,
But I should crown it; and reproach my heart,
For having not prevented your request.
Was ever soul so sensible of love,
As mine hath been for you! and who but you
Could e'er deserve such love? I never err'd:
Witness ye heavens! and with your thunder rend
This heart if e'er it err'd, if e'er I stain'd
The purity of passion, or in thought
Wander'd from Mariamne.
Mar. In your breast
I could have spar'd your son a little space;
But sure you lov'd him not.
Her. What! am I form'd
Like monumental marbles, and receive
The name of father from the sculptor's art
And features of the rock? Am I so dead
To the sweet cares that fathers ought to feel?—
An old man's rapture when he first beholds
A new-born heir, when years of fruitless hope
Have led him childless to the verge of life,
Cannot surpass those dear paternal joys,
Which my fond bosom from my son received.
Mar. Yet you resign'd him for a prey to Rome,
With less reluctance!——
Her. Cæsar would allow
Of no alternate to preserve our crown.
Suppliant, I long entreated him to name
What other test of sacred faith he pleas'd:
But frowning, with a victor's haughty air,
He pointed to a picture on the wall,
Whose silent eloquence too plainly spoke
His fix'd resolve against the suit I urg'd.
Mar. What picture?
Her. Perseus, led in chains through Rome:
Where the sad fate of Macedon appear'd
Prophetic of our own, should we like her
Boast a false vigour, and provoke the rage
Of Rome, unequal to sustain her arms.
There fancy figur'd to my mournful eyes,
The wealth of Palestine in chargers pil'd;
Our shields and spears on moving trophies hung,
Ingloriously revers'd; and then succeed
Nobles, and matrons, with a virgin train,
In long procession through th' unpitying crowd:
But oh! what stings of grief and horror pierc'd
My agonizing heart, when there I view'd
A royal captive, far transcending all
In matchless beauty and majestic woe,
Her form resembling thine! On her a throng
Of gay patricians fix'd their wond'ring eyes,
Enamour'd; and with rival passion strove,
Who first should prostrate to his brutal joys
Her unpolluted charms. Thy future doom
Thus pictur'd to my view, so wrapt my soul
In clouds of deep despair, I strait comply'd
To give the filial pledge.
Mar. Just Heav'n, exact
With strict account, from Cæsar's rigid heart,
A pang, for every pang that tortures mine!
May public discord and domestic jars
Make his short reign a stormy winter's day!
And may his children with dishonest shame
Redden his hoary cheek; and wound his soul
With keener anguish than their mother bore
Amid her fiercest throes!
Her. Leave him t' enjoy
The destiny allotted, and restrain
Your passionate complaints, which but foment
A grief much greater than the cause requires.
Mar. Your strange insensibility foments
My wonder more: what grief's more rational,
Or what can equal mine, whose darling hope
Is ravish'd in the tender dawn of life
By savages? A miscreant haughty race!
Who with hereditary hate pursue
The name of monarch; and from us dissent
In manners, habit, speech, religion, laws.
There my poor infant, like a beauteous flow'r
Transplanted to a cold unfriendly soil,
Must droop neglected! What protecting hand
Will there with tender delicacy guard
His op'ning bloom? Ah, none!—He there must live
A friendless exile; he! whose menial train
Nobles were proud to grace, and all conspir'd
To make his hours in downy circles dance,
And sooth his soul to joy, must now endure—
Alas! what not endure!
Her. The Roman name
Is far renown'd for all the softer arts
Which polish life, and with ennobling grace
Illustrate virtue. Would you but attend,
The voice of reason dictates to our choice,
The deed which strong necessity constrains.
What court but that of Rome could form his mind
By surest maxims, ere he mounts the throne,
To guide the reins of empire?——Thus of old,
Philip from his dejected realm was sent,
A tender hostage to the Theban state:
Where founding his high virtue on the plan
Of great Epaminondas, he reveng'd
The wrongs of Macedon; and soon reduc'd
More than a hundred potentates.
Mar. The deeds
Of my heroic ancestors might fire
My son, t' ascend the laurel'd heights of fame,
Without a Roman guide. If he pursues
With equal steps the glorious paths they trod,
Like them he'll awe the nations round, and reign
Honour'd in peace, and terrible in war.
Were he of growth in radiant steel to lead
The files of war against his country's foe,
No soft emasculating tear should stain
The lustre of his arms: I'd gird the sword
On the young warrior's thigh, and send him forth,
Resolv'd to conquer in so just a cause,
Or dauntless in her dear defence to fall.
Her. Why then regret you with this rage of grief,
The happier triumphs of auspicious peace

Which he bestows? For none but he had pow'r
To avert the furies of invasive war:
For that sole pledge, Judæa smiles to see
Soft quiet spreading wide her turtle wings
O'er all her bounds; and him we both must own
The guardian of her crown.
Mar. The crown is bought
Far, far too dear, with such a precious bribe!
Preserv'd by mean submission to the frown
Of alien states, what's he who wears it more
Than a vain idol of imperial pow'r,
Which moves subservient to the master-hand,
No freedom left to will? Had Cæsar urg'd
This haughty mandate, when the realm obey'd
The founders of my Asmonæan race,
They would have plum'd his eagles on the field!
Her. I neither envy nor defame the dead;
Peace to their honour'd shades! Nor should you praise
Their actions, only in reproach to mine;
That's too severe—When they the sceptre sway'd,
Rome had not stretch'd the terror of her arms,
From far Euphrates and the conquer'd east,
To Lusitania and th' Atlantic main.
If they reign'd now, their prudence would inspire
The same pacific councils I pursue;
Since her vast pow'r makes all resistance vain:
Vain as the fury which a wintry storm
Dischargeth on the sea, whose waves enjoy
Th' impetuous ruin of the rushing clouds,
And swell with prouder state.—Alas! thy breast
Still heaves with sighs! Forbear!—My heart repays
Each tear with drops of blood!—Provoke not heav'n,
By violating with superfluous grief,
The brightest image of itself, imprest
On thy resembling graces.
Mar. Though my tears
Equall'd the dew drops of the weeping morn,
My fate requires them all!—His infant-charms
Sweetly supply'd your absence, and beguil'd
My widow'd hours, whene'er the voice of war
Call'd you to distant camps!—
Her. If ev'ry star
Contain'd a golden world, and bounteous heav'n
Would make me lord of all, I'd not forsake
My Mariamne, to receive the boon.
My absence never shall afflict thee more.
The blaze of glory, whose deluding light
Misled me from thy arms, shall now be lost
In love's superior flame: Pheroras, train'd
In Roman camps, and perfected in arms,
Shall have the conduct of our future wars.
And now, thou dearest treasure of my soul!
Prepare with every smiling grace t'adorn
The festival; and let victorious joy
Chase every black idea from thy mind:
For ever banish from thy gentle breast
All cares, except the pleasing cares of love!
Be this the prelude of eternal peace,
And mutual passion with our years increase!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter SOHEMUS *and* SALOME.

Soh. Restrain this flood of unavailing tears!
For if they flow for pity or remorse,
They flow in vain. In distant ages past
Pity died young; of grief, they say, to see
An eagle wreak his malice on a wren.
If she were yet on earth, where could she find
A nobler palace than a brother's breast?
But there you found her not; the more's the shame!
Since pity's fled to heav'n, we'll send remorse
To howl in hell; it has no business here!—
But if these tears flow from the nobler source
Of indignation, and the generous shame
Of injur'd merit, if they relish strong
The bitterness of soul from which they stream;
O, let increasing fury swell the tide,
Ev'n whilst we put in act our great revenge!
So weeps the storm, while the devouring waves
Close o'er the wrecks it made.
Sal. Had I not seen
His cheek discolour'd, when his passion foam'd;
And heard him thunder threats of instant death
To me, and all whose generous spirits scorn
To bear th' oppression of his haughty queen;
I never had believ'd myself so lost
To his affection.
Soh. Lost! he lov'd you not;
Ambition is the mistress of his soul:
The queen herself holds but the second place.
To please that mistress he condemn'd to die
All the wife's kindred; now, to please the wife,
His own must bleed: greatness hath made him deaf
To nature's voice, ev'n while she pleads for you.
Sal. The wretch, who in an earthquake sees the ground
Heave like a swelling wave before it gapes
To sink him to the centre, stands as safe,
As I so near the tyrant!
Soh. In his court,
On these sad terms at best you but enjoy
A prison of state. When rival princes laid
Their sceptres at your feet, the queen prevail'd
To have each honourable suit refus'd.
Sal. Revenge no more shall grovel in the dark,
But fan with dragon wings the face of day;
Oppose her course who can! It is resolv'd—
Soh. Once Mariamne was the destin'd prey;
But since her charms enthral the king as fast,
As in the freshness of her bridal love,
They both shall die.
Sal. Yes, both; and all their friends

At once descending crowd the gates of night;
For self-defence will sanctify the deed,
And fame, th' officious herald of success,
Will blazon our renown;—and though we fail,
'Tis great to dare.
Soh. When those proud cedars fall,
Their spreading ruin will destroy the shrubs
Which flourish in their shade.—And lo, the man,
Whom fate selects t'achieve her high decree!

SCENE II.

To them SAMEAS *enters.*

Sal. This diamond, Sameas, but prepares the way
For future favours. [*Gives him a jewel.*
Sam. Your auspicious smiles,
Madam, o'er pay my service.
Soh. Sameas, wait
A while in my apartment, and I come
To instruct you further to deserve her grace.
[*Exit* SAM.

SCENE III.

Sal. The diamond which I gave him is the queen's;
Arsinoe lent it, for the jeweller
To model one for me.
Soh. It sure will prove
Of dearest value now; I was amaz'd
To see you give an earnest of such price,
To one whose genuine malice renders vice
Its own reward, and kills for killing sake.
Sal. The wretch is avaricious; we must feed
The appetite of wealth, which urg'd him first
To trade in death.
Soh. How urg'd?
Sal. Along the shore
He walk'd one ev'ning, when the clamorous rage
Of tempests wreck'd a ship; the crew were sunk,
The master only reach'd the neighb'ring strand,
Borne by a floating fragment; but, so weak
With combating the storm, his tongue had lost
The faculty of speech, and yet for aid
He faintly wav'd his hand, on which he wore
A fatal jewel. Sameas, quickly charm'd
Both by its size and lustre, with a look
Of pity, stoop'd to take him by the hand;
Then cut the finger off to gain the ring,
And plung'd him back to perish in the waves;
Crying, go dive for more.—I've heard him boast
Of this adventure.
Soh. He's a very fiend!
If we succeed, he shall not live an hour,
In mercy to ourselves: his poisoning art
In time would taint the vital breath of spring,
And spread contagion with each spicy gale—
[*A messenger enters.*
Mess. Lord Hazeroth releas'd demands to see
Your lordship— [*Exit.*
Soh. Me?
Sal. Receive him; I retire.

SCENE IV.

HAZEROTH *and* SOHEMUS.

Haz. The king, I thank his grace! vouchsafes me leave
To breathe a freer air, than what was judg'd
Fit for my constitution; though the terms
Of freedom are severe.
Soh. What terms, my lord?
Haz. To sue for reconcilement, and receive
In sacred friendship that injurious hand,
Which coop'd me, like a starling in a cage:—
You know the man!
Soh. My lord, the man you mean
Bears such devotion to your high descent,
That 'tis the favourite passion of his soul,
To live your humblest servant—
Haz. And his tongue
Distils court-honey, while his heart o'erflows
With quintessence of gall!
Soh. That character,
My lord, with great submission I disown.
You hear the dictates of an honest heart,
That's warm in all your interests.
Haz. You confin'd
My person, like a felon's, to promote
My int'rest! statesmen have peculiar arts!
They're so mysterious, few can apprehend
The favours they confer!
Soh. The crime deserv'd
Severer penance than the king enjoin'd.
Haz. I thank your majesty!
Soh. I then, my lord,
Bore th' express image of the sov'reign pow'r;
And that's allow'd to dignify the coin,
However mean the metal. Me you brav'd,
With most unseemly licence; but th' affront
Wounded the king, and his prerogative
Reveng'd itself, not me.
Haz. Whene'er the spleen
And pride of tools in office are chastis'd,
The king's affronted!—'Tis the general cry,
From those who lord it in the Sanhedrim,
To him who drives the camels!
Soh. When, my lord,
Your shining merits meet their just reward;
Distinguish'd with some honourable post,
As soon they must; you'll own my doctrine sound.
Nothing but duty to preserve the crown
In its full lustre, 'till the king return'd,
Could urge me to exert an act of power
On you, my lord, whose qualities adorn
Your royal lineage:—but, the noblest fruits
Have too much tartness, 'till the mellowing year
Digest their eager juices.
Haz. Youth is apt
To incur such indiscretions, as the king
Forgave in me, and you, my lord, forget:
Our friendship here begins.
Soh. May death alone
Dissolve the honour'd tie! [*Ex.* HAZ.] O flattery!
How soon thy smooth insinuating oil
Supples the toughest fool! [*Exit* SOH.

SCENE V.

MARIAMNE *and* ARSINOE.

Mar. With less regret
I can support your absence, since my son
Will find so kind a guardian, to discharge
The dear engagements that a mother owes:
We differ but in name.
Arsi. The prince shall be
The tender object of my hourly care:
Happy, that fate reserves it in my pow'r,
To express the sense my grateful heart retains
Of royal favour.
Mar. Nature form'd our sex
For soft endearing offices: she starts,
When pity is depos'd, and cruel pride
Usurps the vacant throne. Alas! you see
How deep the darts of fortune wound the great,
Though clad in golden armour. Were you sway'd
By favours in reversion, which allure
Ev'n vulgar souls to succour the distress'd,
Int'rest would tell you, that your darling son
May want a friend; and then, my tender plant
In the full verdure of his royal growth,
May recompense your kind protecting care,
And shield him from a storm.—Is the time fix'd
For your departure?
Arsi. Sohemus intends
T' obtain the royal mandate to delay
My journey with my lord; then all my joys,
Like the false colours of the show'ry bow,
Will fade in tears!
Mar. The politician's art
Must so revenge his disappointed love!
His spider-constitution would dissolve
In its own venom, if he should forbear
To spin it off in crafty dark intrigues,
Pernicious to my peace, and those I love.
Before the banquet, you shall quit the court;
Then let Flaminius vindicate his claim.
And by this prompt compliance with your lord,
Form all your future conduct; and effect
The pow'r to please, and not to give him pain:
For wedded love is founded on esteem,
Which the fair merits of the mind engage,
For those are charms that never can decay:
But time, which gives new whiteness to the swan,
Improves their lustre.
Arsi. None of human race
Would live more happy, could we but transcribe
The bright example of a royal pair:
If my Flaminius ever would reward
My constant ardour, with an equal flame;
Engag'd by such endearing decencies
As make the lamp of love in Herod's breast
To burn so bright as never to consume.
Mar. Beware of flatt'ry! 'tis a flow'ry weed,
Which oft offends the very idol-vice,
Whose shrine it would perfume.
Arsi. But rigid truth
Turns praise to incense, which the nicest sense
Of virtue may receive. In your soft chains
Your captive lord is led from joy to joy:
Days, months, and years, in circling raptures roll,
And each advancing hour outshines the past.
None, none but he can such a treasure boast,
Rich in perfections, able to suffice
His avarice of love.
Mar. When hearts are join'd
In virtuous union, love's impartial beams
Gild the low cottage of the faithful swain
With equal warmth, as when he darts his fires
On canopies of state.
Arsi. The danger's fled,
And now I may disclose a stronger proof
Of Herod's passion, than the long records
Of love contain.
Mar. What proof?—a dangerous proof
Conceal'd from me!
Arsi. When Cæsar's mounted beams
Prevail'd o'er Antony's inferior star,
He thought the victor, in severe revenge,
Would take both life and crown; his life and crown
Were toys beneath his care; but oh! what pangs
He felt, reflecting that your death alone
Could save your beauties to himself entire!
How vast a passion his, who could not bear
A rival in the grave!
Mar. How! did the king
To the red hand of slaughter doom the breast
Of once-lov'd Mariamne? Gave command
This breast should bleed, where never dwelt a thought
Disloyal or unkind!—Had other lips
Breath'd forth this fatal truth, it would appear
The dictate of inventive spleen, disclos'd
To violate my peace: but you're sincere;
And, knowing that, I know myself undone!
Arsi. O, that I had been born like nature's mutes,
That swim the silent deep!—Believe me false;
Or else, with me, believe the king's decree
A test of wond'rous love, and dear esteem.
Mar. Love, and esteem!——
Arsi. Alas! rekindling rage
Glows in your cheek, and sparkles in your eyes:—
Think me perfidious, or distrust the power,
And evidence of ev'ry faithful sense,
Rather than doubt yourself the worship'd shrine
Of his fond soul, and treasure of his joys.
Mar. To dissipate my doubt, recite the whole,
Without evasions.
Arsi. When he went to Rhodes,
He thus to Sohemus his charge address'd.
If I to Cæsar's rage a victim fall,
Let not my beauteous queen survive, to grace
The victor's triumphs, or to crown his love:
Let me lie envy'd in the grave, possess'd
Of Mariamne there! a happier doom,
Than 'tis to live the world's imperial lord
Without my queen, or rival'd in my love.
Mar. Whene'er did cruelty assume a look
So smooth and fair before?—To summon death,
And arm the terror with a dart of love,
Against his queen! his wife! whose ardent vows,
Incessant pray'r and sacrifice, implor'd
Th' unutterable name, to make his head

White as the flow'ring almond, with increase
Of prosp'rous days, that ages yet unborn
Might bow before his throne, and bless his pow'r;
When I lie unlamented and forgot,
A little heap of dust: and this return!——
A sad return indeed!
Arsi. Call it despair,
And fear of losing what his soul adores.
Our deeds receive their colour from the will;
His tongue was cruel, but his heart was kind;
And rigour was, at worst, the sudden child
Of grief, and bore a fix'd, but melting eye:
Or if a crime, the crime of boundless love.
Mar. Good heav'n! that perfidious creature, man!
With what dissembled agonies of grief
He cried, farewell! and fainted in my arms;
I, credulously fond, thought all sincere!
Arsi. His grief was undissembled; but your charms
Have wrought his love to rage.
Mar. If this poor stock
Of artless beauty hath such fatal pow'r,
When you, Arsinoe, have a daughter born,
Beg all deformities of shape and face,
T'insure her quiet from that monster, man!
Who, quitting reason, a celestial claim,
To the sweet harmony of souls prefers
A little white and red, the airy food
Of bestial appetite; and for a cheek,
Whose transient beauties hardly will outwear
The wardrobe of a flow'r—[*A Messenger enters.*
Mess. The king and court
Intreat your majesty would come, to grace
The banquet.
Mar. No! I'm indispos'd—[*Exit Mess.*] Now fly,
Arsinoe, fly the meditated snare,
Which Sohemus will spread; and may your love
In the warm smile of fortune flourish fair,
Fruitful of virtuous joys: but, if the pow'r
Blast with malignant frowns the blooming sweets,
Absolve your destiny of partial rage:
Think on the wife, the mother, and the queen,
Whose heart her hostile troops have long besieg'd:
Think with kind pity on the countless store
Of Mariamne's woes, and weep no more.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

Enter SALOME *alone.*

Sal. I thought my heart was arm'd with adamant
Against remorse; but nature fools me now;
A faint cold shiv'ring seizeth every limb

SCENE VII.

Enter SOHEMUS.

Sal. My lord! O breathe some cordial to revive
My sick'ning expectation.
Soh. To defeat
Our purpose, Fortune, with malicious joy,
Fav'ring the queen, hath snatch'd her from the stroke
Of lifted thunder; but the bolt is hurl'd,
And on her head the ruin shall rebound.
Her stern refusal to partake the feast,
In foul suspicion will confirm the king,
Absolve us, and to her transfer the crime:
With hope attend th' event. [*Exit* SOH.

SCENE VIII.

SALOME *alone.*

On this great hour,
Shine, all ye planets, whose malignant rays
Blast the fair prosp'rous growth of regal pow'r!
Hark!—Death's in action; from the banquet sounds
The music of his triumphs, groans and cries.

SCENE IX.

Enter PHERORAS.

Phe. Give me, good heaven! to feed on wholesome herbs
In camps, and drink the pure untainted spring;
Since death in ambush lies in sparkling cups,
And courtly viands.
Sal. Why, my lord, so pale?
What strange disorder ends the festival?
Phe. Sameas, the wretch whom I preferr'd to court,
Design'd to poison all.
Sal. Avert it, heav'ns!
I hope he fail'd.
Phe. His felon-cheek ne'er chang'd
Its colour, when he brought th' impoison'd bowl,
With garlands crown'd, and gave it to the king:
Who with the fondness of a lover cry'd,
He'd not indulge his taste, because the queen
Refus'd t' adorn the circle; so resign'd
To Hazeroth the pledge of royal grace:
Sudden his lips grew livid, and discharg'd
A purple foam, his labouring bosom swell'd,
His eye-balls like malignant meteors glar'd,
Unmov'd and ghastly: as the venom spread,
Frightful convulsions writh'd his tortur'd limbs,
Then, mad with anguish, rushing to the floor,
He groan'd his soul away.
Sal. All 'scap'd but he?
Phe. Had not the villain over-drug'd the wine,
We all had perish'd.

SCENE X.

HEROD *enters on one side of the Stage, and* SOHEMUS *on the other.*

Her. [*To* SOH.] Will the queen obey
Our order, and attend us?
Soh. Sir, she comes
With much reluctance.

Enter MARIAMNE.

Her. [*To* MAR.] Did the banquet want
Variety, or elegance of art,
To engage you to partake? If all our court

Had been alike abstemious, death had miss'd
A rich repast.
Mar. Death! I can bear the sound:
Ill fate is grown familiar to my ear.
Her. There let it meet your eye.
[*She goes to the door which he points to.*
O'er the black crime
How white a veil of innocence she throws!
Soh. Her eyes glance indignation, now she finds
Th' envenom'd dart hath err'd.
Mar. Poor Hazeroth!
Thy freedom cost thee dear!
Her. You have been just,
In punishing the traitor's insolence;
Whom in excess of clemency I spar'd,
Because allied to you.
Mar. Murder'd by me!——
So let the tiger sheath his savage fangs,
And for the mangled fawn implead the roe!
To build my frame the forming pow'r infus'd
Too mild a spirit, in too soft a mold,
For such barbarian deeds.——Who wears the sword
That, flesh'd in slaughter, levell'd to the dust
The royal stem, whence that poor scion sprung?
[*Pointing towards* HAZ.
Who doom'd to death the hoary majesty
Of good Hyrcanus? Whose insatiate rage
Murder'd my royal father and his son?
Bid fame to late posterity report
That Mariamne did it:——She destroy'd
Her grandsire, father, uncle, brother, all
Her Asmonæan race; and then constrain'd
Herod to wear a crown!
Her. So grac'd, to fall
A nobler victim to her last revenge!
Mar. Call your brib'd witnesses; they're useful paint
To varnish acts of arbitrary rage.
Her. Why comes not Sameas? [*Exit* SOH.
Oh! how blest am I,
If heaven preserves that angel form the seat
Of innocence and truth: but much I fear
Too plain conviction; for thy dream reveal'd
This meditated crime: I heard thee cry,
The king is poison'd.—But attend the proof.

SCENE XI.

Enter SOHEMUS *with* SAMEAS.

Soh. [*To* SAM.] The diamond will confirm your evidence. [*Aside.*
Her. Sameas beware, and tremble to transgress
The bounds of truth: If one assertion fail
Of utmost evidence against the queen,
Thou for a single fiction shalt descend
Quick to the heart of hell. Who gave the drugs
That poison'd Hazeroth?
Sam. Arsinoe said
She brought them from the queen; and much extoll'd
Their pow'rful virtue to revive the flames
Of dying love.
Mar. Heaven guard my innocence!
Her. Haste! call Arsinoe.
Soh. Sir, she fled the court
In great disorder.
Her. How!
Soh. The Roman camp
Protects her guilt.
Her. A potion to revive
The flames of love! Did e'er my passion need
The wicked pow'r of art to make it glow?
[*To* MAR.
O'erwhelm'd with blank confusion!—
Mar. Must a dream,
The transient image of a troubled thought,
Join'd with that villain's frontless perjury,
Be clear consummate proof, t'affirm a fact
Would make fiends start, and stand in wild amaze
Abstracted from their hate? Can he produce
A promise of rewards, or present bribe,
To fortify this proof?
Sam. Arsinoe gave
This precious token of your future grace.
[*Shews a jewel.*
Her. Know you this diamond, sorceress?
Mar. 'Tis the same
You gave me on your birth-day.
Her. To be made
The lure of death—O foul!
Mar. Arsinoe's false;
Send, intercept her flight; let her confront
His evidence; and if they both conspire
To attaint my innocence———
Her. My guards!—secure
[*To the captain of the guard.*
That wicked woman with a double guard——
Seize her, I say!
Mar. Friend, tremble not to obey
His orders, thou'rt a soldier.—But, my lord!
Think not these tears, the frailty of my sex,
Argue a sense of guilt, or servile hope
Of moving pity, to retard my doom;
I weep not for myself, nor wish to ward
The blow, whene'er misguided justice strikes:
But if I e'er was treasur'd in your heart,
For sure you lov'd me once——
Her. And lov'd too well!
May all who hate me love as much as I,
And then be thus requited!
Mar. When I'm dead,
O, let the stream of dear affection flow,
Redoubled on my son! to him transfer
The share I've lost—And never may the wrong
His mother bears, obstruct the sweet returns
Of filial duty and paternal love!
But may my memory his soul inspire
To scorn inglorious life, when honour calls
Greatly to act, or suffer in her cause:
And think the debt which death is sure to claim,
A tribute due to virtue, and to fame. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter HEROD *and* PHERORAS.

Phe. The silent night hath pass'd her sable noon;
In mercy to your realm, regard your health,
Compose yourself to sleep.
Her. Bid the wretch sleep,
Whose limbs, extended on the rack, endure
The utmost stretch of pain: I suffer more!
More, my Pheroras, more! The balm of sleep
Can ne'er refresh these eyes, 'till the pale hand
Of death shall draw their curtains, and exclude
The busy buzzing swarm of stinging thoughts.
My bed, the scene of all my blissful hours,
Of all my tender, chaste, endearing joys,
Which now have wing'd their everlasting flight,
Is grown the den of horror and despair.
O Mariamne!—With my setting sun,
Ill fortune now projects a deeper shade:
I wish I were as I had never been,
Number'd among the dead!
Phe. Sir, let her crime
Erase the faithful characters, which love
Imprinted on your heart.
Her. Alas! the pain
We feel, whene'er we dispossess the soul
Of that tormenting tyrant, far exceeds
The rigour of his rule.
Phe. With reason quell
That haughty passion; treat it as your slave:
Resume the monarch.
Her. Where's the monarch now?——
The vulgar call us gods, and fondly think
That kings are cast in more than mortal molds:
Alas! they little know that when the mind
Is cloy'd with pomp, our taste is pall'd to joy;
But grows more sensible of grief or pain.
The stupid peasant with as quick a sense,
Enjoys the fragrance of a rose, as I:
And his rough hand is proof against the thorn,
Which, rankling in my tender skin, would seem
A viper's tooth. O blissful poverty!
Nature, too partial, to thy lot assigns
Health, freedom, innocence, and downy peace,
Her real goods: and only mocks the great
With empty pageantries! Had I been born
A cottager, my homely bowl had flow'd
Secure from pois'nous drugs; but now my wife!—
Let me, good heav'n! forget that guilty name,
Or madness will ensue.——

SCENE II.

The High-Priest enters.

Her. At this late hour,
When only discontented spectres roam,
In moon-light walks; or yet more anxious men,
With pangs of agonizing passion torn,
Accuse their stars, and with their sorrows make
The midnight echoes mourn; at this late hour,
What discords break the virtuous harmony,
Which wont to reign within thy pious breast?
High-Pr. O, that, my royal lord, that which will spread
O'er Palestine the blackest veil of woe,
That ever nation wore! Forgive my zeal,
Which breaks through courtly forms, to execute
The heavenly office which my order claims.
Peace is my province; and I prostrate beg,
By all your public and domestic joys,
By the dear offspring of your royal bed,
By all that merits your regard, release
Your injur'd queen!
Her. Have you not heard her crime?
Shall I resume a sorceress to my breast,
Who, unprovok'd, with black infernal hate
Attempted our perdition? No!——
High-Pr. My liege!
Her gentle goodness ne'er could break the band
Of nature, and the stronger ties of love.
Her. Thirst for her husband's blood!—A lioness
Is kinder to her mate.
High-Pr. It cannot be:
Some wretch hath sold his mercenary soul,
T' accuse her without cause.
Her. Is all our court
Combin'd in perjury? They all condemn
Her execrable deed.
High-Pr. Their tongues are tun'd
To what they think delights the royal ear:
In this confusion, should a comet rise,
They'd cry, the queen hath set the world o' fire!
Vouchsafe her audience, sir; hear her defence
With cool impartial reason: error oft
Assumes the shape of truth, and the wild eye
Of passion rarely can at first discern
Th' imposture in disguise. Let not your heart,
Where late her beauteous image was inshrin'd,
Be now immur'd with marble from her pray'r!
Offended heav'n, with pitying ear, accepts
The sigh of penitents, and freelier grants
Access when soonest sought.
Her. Did she request
Admittance to me?
High-Pr. Yes; with such an air
Of grief ennobled with majestic grace;
With such undaunted fortitude of mind,
Soft'ned with pensive sweetness in her eyes,
That speaks her wrong'd; none but a soul as white
As new-born innocence, could shine so clear
On the dim verge of death.—My gracious lord,
Forgive the frailties of forgetful age!
She took this ruby-bracelet from her arm,
Which on this anniverse she wont to wear,
In sweet remembrance of the nuptial morn,
When first you tied it on: Restore, she cried,

This pledge of fond affection to the king:
Tell him, howe'er unkind! I've yet deserv'd
To wear no other chain than this of love:——
Then wept a tender show'r.
[HEROD *takes the bracelet.*
Her. The time hath been,
I'd not have seen my Mariamne drop
One precious tear, for all the radiant mines
The womb of earth contains; but now her heart
Is chang'd, and so must mine!—Yet if she craves
To see me now, give orders; let the guard
Conduct her to me. [*Exeunt* HER. *and* PHER.
High-Pr. Now, with speedy flight,
Descend, celestial ministers of peace,
Who kindle virtuous ardours, and preside
O'er nuptial vows; aid with auspicious zeal,
The first reunion of those royal hearts;
And never from your sacred charge remove,
'Till death's commission'd to divide their love!
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Enter SOHEMUS *and* SALOME.

Soh. Thus far with fate to friend, and greatly fir'd
With bright ambition, we've pursued the path
To glory; and, with swift and easy steps,
Approach the summit of imperial pow'r.
Sal. But should the king's enfeebled soul relent,
And pardon Mariamne?
Soh. She'll disdain
To re-ascend the throne, or owe her life
To low submission: for the stubborn sense
Of genuine virtue in a royal mind,
Ne'er softens with affliction; but becomes
The more obdurate, when it once hath griev'd,
As metals after melting harder grow.

SCENE IV.

To them SAMEAS *enters.*

Sal. Sameas, thou best of friends! thy wish'd approach
By instinct I perceiv'd; thy influence spreads
Like rich perfumes, which, though invisible,
Refresh the sense.
Sam. Madam, I hop'd my art
Had well deserv'd a jewel of your own,
T' engage my service: 'twas too politic
To feign a favour but to serve your cause,
When the nice article of proof came on.
Sal. Contemn that worthless pebble; we're intent
On far more glorious views; whole provinces
Shall recompence thy love.
Sam. Rather consult
Our common safety; life is all I crave.
Sal. What may'st thou mean?
Sam. Th' high-priest hath won the king
To see the queen to-night.
Soh. Impossible!
Sam. But now I met him speeding cross the court;
Round him a rabble of her menial slaves
Ran big with joy.
Soh. Confound his holy craft!
Fortune at once rolls back the bounteous flow
Of hope, and leaves us gasping on the shore.
[SAL. *whispers* SOH.
I'll do it.
Sam. What, my lord?—What must we do?—
Soh. Why——suffer greatly, since we cannot act.
Thy part remains—to persevere, though racks
Strain every sinew smaller than the threads
Which form a spider's web.—Ne'er hope for grace.
Sam. I'll risk the event, and go—
[SOHEMUS *stabs him.*
Soh. To hell!
To hell! poor tim'rous wretch, and tell the devil——
[*In the struggle* SAMEAS *wrests the dagger out of* SOHEMUS'S *hand; and, in falling backward, he strikes it into* SALOME'S *bosom, and dies.*
Soh. Princess ador'd and lov'd! oh, speak!
Sal. Death! Death!——
Save me, O Sohemus, from that black troop
Of grizly shapes, which in fantastic dance
Frisk round, and call me hence.—O, kind in vain—
A fiery whirlwind bears me from thy arms
To seas of boiling sulphur; the blue waves
Receive me to their bosom.—Down! deep! deep!
[*She dies.*

SCENE V.

Enter HEROD *and* PHERORAS, *with attendants.*

Her. What hideous sound of shrieks and dying groans
Echo'd from hence, as if by violence
A soul had left her mansion unprepar'd?
Pher. Horrors! our sister dead!
Soh. That villain came
[*Pointing to* SAMEAS'S *body.*
In all the gestures of extreme despair;
Crying she brib'd him to accuse the queen;
And having heard Arsinoe would return
To null his evidence, rage and remorse
Urg'd him to plunge the dagger in her breast,
And then he pierc'd himself.
Her. O Salome!
The jarring elements which compos'd thy frame,
Made thee aspiring, turbulent, and bold:
In others woe was thy supreme delight;
And most against my queen thy malice aim'd
Her venom'd shafts; but now thy guilty blood
Will quench the flames, which thy infernal torch
Spread o'er the harvest of my nuptial joys.
Soh. How blind, alas! to fate is the dim eye
Of dull mortality!
Her. O, Sohemus!
A thrilling horror freezeth every vein,
While I review the precipice of fate,
Where late I stood perplex'd; but one step more
Had plunged me in the abyss of endless woe,

A most consummate wretch!—But here she comes,
[MARIAMNE *enters in a mourning habit.*
Welcome as night, with sweet refreshing shade,
And balmy dews, to the faint traveller,
Who journies o'er a waste of burning sands,
With painful steps and slow.——Remove the dead;
She hath no vengeful appetite to glut,
With such sad spectacles.
[*All go out, except* HEROD.

SCENE VI.

HEROD *and* MARIAMNE.

Her. Approach, my queen!
Thou dearest miracle of nature's hand,
Adorn'd with all perfections!
Mar. Dare you trust
Your murd'ress near you?
Her. Thy soft innocence
Was form'd to kill with darts of keen desire;
I beg those pleasing wounds: approach, my fair!
Heavens! at the sight of that celestial face,
Each savage passion from the soul retires;
As wolves forsake the fold, when first the sun
Flames o'er the eastern hills. Oh! thus, thus, thus,
I'll clasp thee ever to my heaving breast!
Thus on thy lips in glowing rapture seal
A firm eternal union of our souls!
Mar. In vain!—They who dissolved the first, have power
To cancel this.
Her. Dismiss that groundless fear:
Sameas and Salome are now no more;
They've punished their own guilt, and the last breath
Of faction spoke thy virtue greatly wrong'd.
Mar. But the same judge survives, whose credulous ear
Drank all that perjur'd malice could infuse.
You, who condemn'd me for the blackest crime,
On evidence too counterfeit and light
To cheat an idiot's eye, betray'd a will
Dispos'd to credit every feign'd report,
Whene'er malignant passion shall provoke
Other artificers of fraud, to assault
My life or honour.
Her. That unkind reproach
Would change to soft compassion, had you felt
The stings of sorrow which transfix'd my soul,
When first you were accus'd: I would not bear
Such agonies again, for all the crowns
Which e'er ambition sigh'd for.
Mar. To yourself
You owe whate'er you suffer'd; and your pain
Was but the fancied torture of a dream:
But wounds of honour bleed for ever new;
Their anguish is sincere! My fame must bear
The blas of censure, and the letter'd spleen
Of future story.
Her. No! thy fame will shine
More bright, emerging from this short eclipse:
The marks of envy give distinguished grace
To virtue; as indented scars adorn
The soldier's breast.
Mar. I wish my innocence
Wanted that mark of honour, which the tongue
Of malice will miscal the brand of guilt.
Her. The whitest ermine on her skin may bear
An accidental spot; yet none accuse
Her native purity, but call the stain
The crime of fortune. To the doubtful world,
My edict soon will vindicate thy fame;
Lodge that, and all thy cares, within my breast;
Where every gesture, word, and look inspire
The spirit of purest love!
Mar. For which I wear
This livery of death. It suits the day
Which gave me to your arms.
Her. But now, disrob'd
Of those sad weeds, and every gloomy thought,
Smile like an angel breaking from a cloud.
While peace, and joy, and ever-young desire,
Attend thee to my bed, each wedded pair
Shall make our bliss the measure of their vows!
Mar. Your bed! the tiger shall as soon persuade
The hunted deer to harbour in his den.
Her. Damp not my glowing passion with a thought
Of separation! Did our dates extend
To the same length the giant-race enjoy'd,
When nature yet was young, I then should dread
The sad idea of our last divorce;
Though sure that many smiling centuries
Would roll 'twixt death and us!—Oh! did thy love
But equal mine, we'd each in other live
So joined, that, when fate strikes, we both might fall!
I'd not survive thy doom.
Mar. Nor can I yours.
Her. The words are what I wish, but ill explain'd
By that stern look and haughty voice.
Mar. Enquire
Of that domestic oracle, your heart;
If that resolves not the mysterious sense,
Ask Sohemus.
Her. Confusion!
Mar. Do you start,
With sudden rays of dawning truth amaz'd,
As fiends would be, should the meridian sun
Blaze on their black abodes?
Her. Can neither words
Nor actions aught avail, but must disdain
Repay my generous passion? Is thy rage
Grown so implacable, no tender proofs
Are prevalent to assuage it?
Mar. 'Twas a proof
Of tender love, to doom me to the sword
By such an order, as barbarian hate
Would only dictate in the rage of war;
And with that engine of clandestine death
To arm the malice of my foe profess'd!
On Sohemus you safely might rely,
To send me soon to mingle with your dust.
Her. O villain! perjur'd villain! to betray
That charge on which depended all my peace!

On which his life depended!——Nothing less
Than the damn'd witchcraft of thy wicked charms,
Could tempt him to the very cave of death,
To wanton with his darts.—Tear him, ye fiends!—
To that false cheek dissembling nature gave
The blush of virtue, for a veil to lust:
He breath'd that fatal secret to thy ear
In amorous murmurs, when the slave was grown
Frantic with ecstacy———
Mar. My fame defies
Th' envenom'd breath of slander; all my hours
Have kept severest virtue for their guard.
But I presage, offended heaven prepares
To punish that excess of virgin-love,
By which betray'd, I gave my nuptial vow
Against the solemn sanction of our law,
And to an alien's care transferr'd the charge
Of pure religion; who, to flatter Rome,
Neglects her altars, and her faith profanes.
Her. Guards——Take her hence!
[*Guards enter.*
No foolish fond remorse
Shall now delay my vengeance!
[*The Guards lead off* MAR.
Love, farewell!
Rather than doat on her polluted charms,
My sword shall rip the passion from my heart.
Adultery!———Ye violated heavens,
Dart the red light'ning wing'd with tenfold rage,
To blast the adultress! Why did ye forbear
To rivet closer with hot thunderbolts,
The serpents twisted in the folds of lust!

SCENE VII.

Enter PHERORAS.

Her. Pheroras, Oh!—Ten thousand rebels arm:
Grief, horror, shame, distraction!—they besiege
The poor soul, wavering in the fort of life,
And wishing to surrender! Thy kind sword
Might end this insurrection: dar'st thou strike?
[*Points to his breast.*
Pher. Heaven shield from violence that sacred breast!
Fear, guilt, despair, and moon-struck phrenzy rush
On voluntary death: the wise and brave,
When the fierce storms of fortune round 'em roar,
Combat the billows with redoubled force:
Then, if they perish ere the port is gained,
They sink with decent pride; and from the deep
Honour retrieves them, bright as rising stars.
Call reason to your aid, and with your friends
Divide your care: doubt not but Sohemus——
Her. Thou nam'st the very scorpion which hath stung
The centre of my heart.
Pher. Then make his blood
Balm for the wound.
Her. The wound admits no cure!
Nor reason, nor the healing hand of time,
Can bring relief: but heaven inspire my heart,
Before it breaks, with new devis'd revenge,
Equal to that perfidious villain's crime!—
Were his approaches frequent to the queen
When I was absent?
Pher. No; he ever stood
The distant object of her hate.
Her. With ease
They might elude your eye; but Salome
And Sameas sure were conscious of their crimes,
For which he murdered both; and she prepar'd
The pois'nous bowl for me. But from that slave
Tortures shall wring the truth I dread to know.
Secure him for the rack: and let the queen
Drink the same fatal draught she drugg'd for me;
Instant, with her own deathful art, destroy
The artificer of death!—O Mariamne!
Why wouldst thou wrong my honour, and my love,
And urge this direful doom! [*Exit* PHER.

SCENE VIII.

FLAMINIUS *enters to* HEROD.

Her. My Roman friend!
Your unexpected visit finds my court
In wild disorder.
Fla. Sir, the queen's desire
To see the prince occasioned my return
At this uncourtly hour.
Her. Few hours have pass'd
Since you beheld me in triumphant state;
Now, like a meteor from a summer sky,
Ingloriously I'm fallen!
Fla. Banish despair,
And all her gloomy train: doubt not but fate,
In her large volume, still for you reserves
A page, as full of glory as the past.
Her. Glory, Flaminius!——Will an empty name,
A shining bubble, which the vulgar breath
Of thoughtless crowds can swell for whom they please,
E'er recompence the loss I must sustain?
My queen! my wife! the jewel of my soul!
Fla. Mercy's the brightest ornament of power,
And now most needful to preserve your peace.
Her. Justice must be my mercy: She must die!—
She must!——
Fla. But, sir, 'tis safer much to sheathe
The sword of justice, since the destin'd blow
Will chiefly wound yourself. Without your queen,
Your palace, though with gay retinue throng'd,
Will seem a savage desart. You must view
The mother blooming in your beauteous child,
Nor feel a father's joy; each object here
Will rouse the sad remembrance of the bliss
You once possess'd with her. How will you wish
For that sweet converse, when the smiling hours
Danc'd to the music of her heavenly voice,
And the short years were lost in dear delight!
But when her charms are silent, dismal change!
Slow, sullen time on raven wings will fly,
Heavy and black! around you then you'll see
Your son, your nobles, and domestics chang'd;
For each, as their peculiar grief shall urge,
With pensive silence will upbraid the loss

Of mother, queen, or friend. But what's the loss
Of mother, queen, or friend, compar'd to yours?
A wife! the best, the loveliest of her sex,
And late the best-belov'd! in the full pride
Of summer-beauty, like a poisonous weed
Torn from the earth, and by her husband's hand
Unkindly cast to wither in the grave!
Her. My fate would force from rigour's flinty eye
Even tears of blood! [*He weeps.*
Fla. O, sir! reflect, if thus
The bare recital wounds your fancy now,
A yet more dreadful pain may pierce your heart.
Love may once more revive, vain hopeless love!
When the dear object of your longing soul
Lies mouldering in the dust. If so, the wretch
Who, buried in a trance, returns to life,
And walks distracted o'er the rattling bones
Of his dead fathers, in the dreary vault
Less horror feels, than sad remorse will raise
Within your breast!
Her. O Mariamne lost!
To love for ever lost! to love and me!——
I've liv'd love's slave too long: but jealousy,
That yellow fiend, hath dipt the torch in gall,
And now 'twill light no more!
Fla. If the queen's false,
My wife hath been officious to her crimes,
And shares in the pollution: let her plea
Be heard; and if she fails in her defence,
I'll slay her at your feet.
[FLAMINIUS *goes out, and returns immediately with* ARSINOE.

SCENE IX.

HEROD *to* ARSINOE.

Her. As heavenly peace
May sooth your anguish, when the fluttering soul
Prepares to wing her last eternal flight;
Assist my quiet, and resolve my doubts!
Was Sohemus admitted to the queen,
Whilst I was gone to Rhodes?
Arsi. Never, my lord.
Her. Never?
Arsi. His name's offensive to her ear;
And for his person——no antipathy
In nature can be stronger.
Her. So I thought;
But such factitious arts too oft conceal
Criminal correspondence: they might write,
And doubtless did.
Arsi. That commerce could not 'scape
My notice, who, by constant duty bound,
Waited so near the queen.
Her. What if she saw?
Her interest then, and now her fear prevails
To seal the lips of truth.
Fla. Sir, not the frown
Of majesty, nor brandished thunder, awes
A Roman spirit, (such I hope she bears)
To make it start from the plain tracks of truth,
And deviate into falsehood.
Her. Can the queen
Pierce to the close recesses of the soul;
Are thoughts there visible, like children's toys
Kept in a crystal case? Does she retain
Dæmons, to sit secure from mortal sight,
In princes' cabinets, to learn the sum
Of secret councils? Told they this decree—
If Cæsar, to revenge the sacred faith
I held with Anthony, should to the sword
Sentence my head, that her's should likewise fall;
Lest the proud successor, who seiz'd my throne,
Should triumph in my bed?—No! that resolve
A carnal fiend imparted; and she paid
His service with her honour!——
Arsi. Royal sir,
Her honour is unblemished; all the blame
Transfer to my officious zeal! I told
That fatal secret.
Her. How!—Did Sohemus
Impart that most important charge to you?
Arsi. To me his vows of love were then address'd;
Which when disdain'd, with more persuasive force
To recommend his passion, he reveal'd
The dreadful mandate left in trust: and swore
That if you perished by the sword of Rome,
My love alone was ransom for the life
Of my dear royal mistress.
Her. Fly! O fly!
Swift as the cherub to preserve his charge,
Reverse the doom of death. [*Exit* ARSI.

SCENE X.

To them PHERORAS *enters.*

Her. [*To* PHER.] Is Sohemus
Secur'd for torture?
Pher. Sir, he took the alarm,
And fled for safety to the royal tower;
The portal forc'd, the soldiers found him fallen
On his self-slaughtering sword, stretch'd on the ground
Weltering in blood; he speechless there expir'd.
Her. Too far confiding in that traitor's skill
In arts of rule, he so misused my power,
That distant story may record my reign
From year to year, by many a cruel deed;
As the wild progress of a storm is traced
By marks of desolation.

SCENE XI.

Enter MARIAMNE, *supported by the High-Priest and* NARBAL; ARSINOE *follows with the young Prince.*

Her. Heavens avert
The bodings of my soul! I fear the queen——
High-Pr. Oh, sir!
Her. Ha! say'st thou!
High-Pr. A few moments more
Will rank her with the dead!
Arsi. Ere I arrived
The deadly draught was given, which soon will end
The sense of all her woes.
Her. And all my joys!——
O call, call our physicians! now let art

Exert her saving power, or ever prove
The minister of death!—
Mar. The venom's spread
Too far for art.
Her. O! wish to live, and heaven
Will crown thy wish with life: heaven will be just
To that bright innocence, which I have wrong'd!
Wrong'd with excess of love to fury wrought!
O wretch, wretch, wretch!
Mar. Death's welcome, now I hear
My innocence avow'd.
Her. I, I, whose life
Was bound with thine, by striving to secure
Thy beauties all my own, have killed the dove
I fondly grasp'd too close. O see! she's pale:
Take, take, ye powers, my life to lengthen hers!
Chain me, ye furies, to your burning wheel!
Whip me ten thousand years with scorpions there,
To save her life!
Mar. I pity and forgive
Your violence of passion, which hath wrought
The ruin of us both.
Her. I ill deserve
Thy pardon or thy pity.—Yet vouchsafe,
Thou fairest pattern of transcendant goodness!
Vouchsafe thy wretched lord a last embrace,
Whose soul is ready wing'd to wait on thine:
Oh!—bless the dying penitent with peace,
The moments which remain!—
Mar. Good heaven insure [*They embrace.*
Eternal peace to both!
Her. Thou shalt not die—
Thou art too young, too faultless, and too fair,
To fall a prey to death!
Mar. The thick'ning shades
O'erspread my swimming eyes.—Where is my child?
Bring him, poor babe, to take a parting kiss!—
Farewell!—I'm now at peace. [*She dies.*
High-Pr. In that soft sigh
The gentle spirit soar'd.
Arsi. Oh! dead, dead, dead!
Her. Then, death, strike on! [*He faints.*
Fate, thou hast done thy worst.
Pher. My royal brother! Oh!
Nar. My gracious lord!
High-Pr. Good heaven, restore to wretched Palestine
Her sole support and grace!
Her. What minister [*Raising himself.*
Of this dark realm art thou!—If 'tis thy post
To guide the dead through this disastrous gloom,
Lead to that mournful mansion, where the ghosts
Of those abide, whom fatal beauty sent
Untimely to the shades.—See! see! she soars;—
How bright a track she leaves along the sky;
And looks with pity down. Oh see! she rests
On the soft fleece of yonder purple cloud,
Where angels fan her with their golden plumes:
Stay, Mariamne, stay!—
[*He sinks into their arms.*
Pher. O! from his face
The blush of life retires.
Nar. His bosom heaves
With strong convulsive throes.
Fla. Raise him, my lords.
Her. Alas! forbear; ye but prolong the pains
Of labouring nature; let me sink to peace!
And may oblivion cast her sable veil
O'er my sad story, and conceal the crimes
Of majesty misled. My urn, alas!
Can hope for no compassion: when the doom
Of my dear, lovely, virtuous, queen is told,
The tears will freeze on pity's gentle cheek,
And not bedew my ashes!——To your care
[*To* FLA.
Receive this royal orphan, and implore
Cæsar's protection to preserve his crown;
And when, mature in manhood, he receives
A consort to his throne, may every grace
And every virtue join, to make her styl'd
The Mariamne of the admiring age!
May sweet compliance, honour, dear esteem,
And mutual faith, cement their mutual joys!
But ever may he shun too fond excess,
That soft seducing impotence of mind,
By which subdued, his wretched father fell!
Led by imperious love a tortured slave,
To the sad refuge of an early grave. [*He dies.*

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN IN THE CHARACTER OF MARIAMNE.

THE poet, in a whim extremely new,
Coupl'd me with a strange enamour'd Jew;
So violently fond, the loss of life
Was far less dreadful than to leave his wife:
Monster of love! he whisper'd in my ear,
I doat so much——I pr'ythee die, my dear!
Ladies, if such demands are made on beauty,
Defend us all from matrimonial duty!
One may support a living husband's folly;
But, let him feed the worms alone, for Molly.—
And yet, 'tis vain to reason, or to rail,
The tempter man was destin'd to prevail:
To hear him flatter, sigh, implore, protest,
A . . . . *je ne sçai quoi!* . . . . will flutter in the breast.
But o'er intrigues whatever planet reigns,
And fires to bedlam-rage a lover's brains,
One honey-moon's sufficient to restore 'em
From wild impertinence to cool decorum.
By this plain model had the play been wrought,

My Hebrew spark had acted as he ought;
With a keen appetite enjoy'd the feast,
And, decently suffic'd, withdrawn to rest:
But, glutton-like, to grudge the world his leaving,
Was wond'rous unpolite, to my conceiving!
Homer, who human nature nicely knew,
(Ye critics, I read Greek,——as well as you)
In colours of a softer kind display'd
The husband civil to the wife who stray'd.
Though Helen had elop'd, her gentle lord
Renew'd her forfeit claim to bed and board:
For which dear foible of the fair forgiven,
The gods vouchsaf'd to send him quick to heaven:
And in no Spartan novel can I find,
The good man griev'd to leave his spouse behind.
In such gay lights when wedded life is shown,
What couple would not wish the case their own?
But, gallants, if you Herod's rule approve,
To give no quarter in the lists of love;
If jealous rage, or fond fantastic dreams,
Exalt your passion to such dire extremes;
Let each bright Mariamne chuse her man;
Then, kill us all——with kindness, if ye can.

GEORGE BARNWELL.

BY

LILLO.

PROLOGUE.

THE Tragic Muse, sublime, delights to show
Princes distress'd, and scenes of royal woe;
In awful pomp, majestic, to relate
The fall of nations, or some hero's fate;
That scepter'd chiefs may, by example, know
The strange vicissitudes of life below;
What dangers on security attend,
How pride and cruelty in ruin end;
Hence providence supreme to know, and own
Humanity adds glory to a throne.
In every former age, and foreign tongue,
With native grandeur thus the goddess sung.
Upon our stage, indeed, with wish'd success,
You've sometimes seen her in an humbler dress;
Great only in distress, when she complains,
In Southern's, Rowe's, or Otway's moving strains,
The brilliant drops that fall from each bright eye,
The absent pomp with brighter gems supply.
Forgive us, then, if we attempt to shew,
In artless strains, a tale of private woe.
A London 'prentice ruin'd is our theme,
Drawn from the fam'd old song that bears his name.
We hope your taste is not so light to scorn
A moral tale esteem'd ere you were born;
Which, for a century of rolling years,
Has fill'd a thousand thousand eyes with tears.
If thoughtless youth, to warn and shame the age
From vice destructive, well becomes the stage;
If this example innocence insure,
Prevent our guilt, or by reflection cure;
If Millwood's dreadful crimes, and sad despair,
Commend the virtue of the good and fair;
Though art be wanting, and our numbers fail,
Indulge the attempt; in justice to the tale.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

THOROWGOOD, *a Merchant.*
BARNWELL, *Uncle to George.*
GEORGE BARNWELL.
TRUEMAN, *Friend to Barnwell.*
BLUNT, *Millwood's Footman.*

WOMEN.

MARIA, *Daughter to Thorowgood.*
MILLWOOD, *Mistress to Barnwell.*
LUCY, *Millwood's Maid.*
Officers, with their Attendants, Keeper, and Footman.

SCENE,—*London, and an adjacent Village.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* THOROWGOOD'S *House.*

Enter THOROWGOOD *and* TRUEMAN.

True. Sir, the packet from Genoa is arrived.
[*Gives letters.*

Thor. Heaven be praised! The storm that threatened our royal mistress, pure religion, liberty, and laws, is, for a time, diverted. The haughty and revengeful Spaniard, disappointed of the loan on which he depended from Genoa, must now attend the slow returns of wealth from his new world, to supply his empty coffers, ere he can execute his proposed invasion of our happy island. By this means, time is gained to make such preparations, on our part, as may, Heaven concurring, prevent his malice, or turn the meditated mischief on himself.

True. He must be insensible indeed, who is not affected when the safety of his country is concerned. Sir, may I know by what means?—— If I am not too bold——.

Thor. Your curiosity is laudable; and I gratify it with the greater pleasure, because from thence you may learn, how honest merchants, as such, may sometimes contribute to the safety of their country, as they do at all times to its happiness; that if hereafter you should be tempted to any action that has the appearance of vice or meanness in it, upon reflecting on the dignity of our profession, you may, with honest scorn, reject whatever is unworthy of it.

True. Should Barnwell, or I, who have the benefit of your example, by our ill conduct, bring any imputation on that honourable name, we must be left without excuse.

Thor. You compliment, young man. [TRUEMAN *bows respectfully.*] Nay, I am not offended. As the name of merchant never degrades the gentleman, so, by no means does it exclude him; only take heed not to purchase the character of complaisant at the expence of your sincerity.—But, to answer your question: The bank of Genoa had agreed, at an excessive interest, and on good security, to advance the king of Spain a sum of money sufficient to equip his vast Armada; of which our peerless Elizabeth (more than in name the mother of her people) being well informed, sent Walsingham, her wise and faithful secretary, to consult the merchants of this loyal city; who all agreed to direct their several agents to influence, if possible, the Genoese to break their contract with the Spanish court. It is done: the state and bank of Genoa having maturely weighed, and rightly judged of their true interest, prefer the friendship of the merchants of London to that of the monarch, who proudly styles himself king of both Indies.

True. Happy success of prudent counsels! What an expence of blood and treasure is here saved! Excellent queen! O how unlike those princes, who make the danger of foreign enemies a pretence to oppress their subjects by taxes great, and grievous to be borne!

Thor. Not so our gracious queen; whose richest exchequer is her people's love, as their happiness her greatest glory.

True. On these terms to defend us, is to make our protection a benefit worthy her who confers it, and well worth our acceptance. Sir, have you any commands for me at this time?

Thor. Only look carefully over the files, to see whether there are any tradesmen's bills unpaid; if there are, send and discharge them. We must not let artificers lose their time, so useful to the public and their families, in unnecessary attendance. [*Exit* TRUEMAN.

Enter MARIA.

Well, Maria, have you given orders for the entertainment? I would have it in some measure worthy the guests. Let there be plenty, and of the best, that the courtiers may at least commend our hospitality.

Mar. Sir, I have endeavoured not to wrong your well-known generosity by an ill-timed parsimony.

Thor. Nay, it was a needless caution: I have no cause to doubt your prudence.

Mar. Sir, I find myself unfit for conversation; I should but increase the number of the company, without adding to their satisfaction.

Thor. Nay, my child, this melancholy must not be indulged.

Mar. Company will but increase it: I wish you would dispense with my absence. Solitude best suits my present temper.

Thor. You are not insensible, that it is chiefly on your account these noble lords do me the honour so frequently to grace my board. Should you be absent, the disappointment may make them repent of their condescension, and think their labour lost.

Mar. He, that shall think his time or honour lost in visiting you, can set no real value on your daughter's company, whose only merit is, that she is yours. The man of quality, who chooses to converse with a gentleman and merchant of your worth and character, may confer honour by so doing, but he loses none.

Thor. Come, come, Maria, I need not tell you, that a young gentleman may prefer your conversation to mine, and yet intend me no disrespect at all; for though he may lose no honour in my company, it is very natural for him to expect more pleasure in yours. I remember the time when the company of the greatest and wisest men in the kingdom would have been insipid and tiresome to me, if it had deprived me of an opportunity of enjoying your mother's.

Mar. Yours, no doubt, was as agreeable to her; for generous minds know no pleasure in society but where it is mutual.

Thor. Thou knowest I have no heir, no child, but thee; the fruits of many years successful industry must all be thine. Now, it would give me pleasure, great as my love, to see on whom you will bestow it. I am daily solicited, by men of the greatest rank and merit, for leave to address you: but I have hitherto declined it, in hopes that, by observation, I should learn which way your inclinations tend; for, as I know love to be essential to the married state, I had rather my approbation should confirm your choice, than direct it.

Mar. What can I say? How shall I answer, as I ought, this tenderness, so uncommon even in the best of parents? But you are without example; yet, had you been less indulgent, I had been most wretched. That I look on the crowd of courtiers that visit here, with equal esteem, but equal indifference, you have observed, and I must needs confess; yet, had you asserted your authority, and insisted on a parent's right to be obeyed, I had submitted, and to my duty sacrificed my peace.

Thor. From your perfect obedience, in every other instance, I feared as much: and therefore would leave you, without a bias, in an affair wherein your happiness is so immediately concerned.

Mar. Whether from a want of that just ambition that would become your daughter, or from some other cause, I know not; but I find high birth and titles don't recommend the man, who owns them, to my affections.

Thor. I would not that they should, unless his merit recommends him more. A noble birth and fortune, though they make not a bad man good, yet they are a real advantage to a worthy one, and place his virtues in the fairest light.

Mar. I cannot answer for my inclinations; but they shall ever be submitted to your wisdom and authority. And as you will not compel me to marry where I cannot love, love shall never make me act contrary to my duty. Sir, have I your permission to retire?

Thor. I'll see you to your chamber. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in* MILLWOOD'S *House.*

Enter MILLWOOD *and* LUCY.

Mill. How do I look to-day, Lucy?

Lucy. Oh, killingly, madam! A little more red, and you'll be irresistible. But why this more than ordinary care of your dress and complexion? What new conquest are you aiming at?

Mill. A conquest would be new indeed.

Lucy. Not to you, who make them every day ——but to me——Well, it is what I am never to expect, unfortunate as I am; but your wit and beauty——

Mill. First made me a wretch, and still continue me so. Men, however generous or sincere to one another, are all selfish hypocrites in their affairs with us; we are no otherwise esteemed or regarded by them, but as we contribute to their satisfaction.

Lucy. You are certainly, madam, on the wrong side in this argument. Is not the expence all theirs? And, I am sure, it is our own fault if we have not our share of the pleasure.

Mill. We are but slaves to men.

Lucy. Nay, it is they that are slaves, most certainly; for we lay them under contribution.

Mill. Slaves have no property; no, not even in themselves: all is the victor's.

Lucy. You are strangely arbitrary in your principles, madam.

Mill. I would have my conquest complete, like those of the Spaniards in the new world; who first plundered the natives of all the wealth they had, and then condemned the wretches to the mines for life, to work for more.

Lucy. Well, I shall never approve of your scheme of government; I should think it much more politic, as well as just, to find my subjects an easier employment

Mill. It is a general maxim among the knowing part of mankind, that a woman without virtue, like a man without honour or honesty, is capable of any action, though never so vile: and yet what pains will they not take, what arts not use, to seduce us from our innocence, and make us contemptible and wicked, even in their own opinion? Then, is it not just, the villains, to their cost, should find us so? But guilt makes them suspicious, and keeps them on their guard; therefore we can take advantage only of the young and innocent part of the sex, who, having never injured women, apprehend no injury from them.

Lucy. Ay, they must be young indeed.

Mill. Such a one, I think, I have found. As I have passed through the city, I have often observed him receiving and paying considerable sums of money; from thence I conclude, that he is employed in affairs of consequence.

Lucy. Is he handsome?

Mill. Ay, ay, the stripling is well made, and has a good face.

Lucy. About——

Mill. Eighteen.

Lucy. Innocent, handsome, and about eighteen!—You will be vastly happy. Why, if you manage well, you may keep him to yourself these two or three years.

Mill. If I manage well, I shall have done with him much sooner. Having long had a design on him, and meeting him yesterday, I made a full stop, and, gazing wishfully in his face, asked his name. He blushed, and, bowing very low, answered, George Barnwell. I begged his pardon for the freedom I had taken, and told him, that he was the person I had long wished to see, and to whom I had an affair of importance to communicate at a proper time and place. He named a tavern; I talked of honour and reputation, and invited him to my house. He swallowed the bait, promised to come, and this is the time I expect him. [*Knocking at the door.*

Somebody knocks——D'ye hear; I am at home to nobody to-day but him. [*Exit* LUCY.] Less affairs must give way to those of more consequence; and I am strangely mistaken if this does not prove of great importance to me, and him too, before I have done with him. Now, after what manner shall I receive him? Let me consider———What manner of person am I to receive? He is young, innocent, and bashful; therefore I must take care not to put him out of countenance at first. But then, if I have any skill in physiognomy, he is amorous; and, with a little assistance, will soon get the better of his modesty. I will even trust to nature, who does wonders in these matters. If to seem what one is not, in order to be the better liked for what one really is; if to speak one thing, and mean the direct contrary, be art in a woman—I know nothing of nature.

Enter BARNWELL, *bowing very low.* LUCY *at a distance.*

Mill. Sir, the surprise and joy—

Barn. Madam!

Mill. This is such a favour— [*Advancing.*

Barn. Pardon me, madam.

Mill. So unhoped for! [*Still advances,*

[BARNWELL *salutes her, and retires as in confusion.*

To see you here—Excuse the confusion—

Barn. I fear I am too bold—

Mill. Alas, sir, I may justly apprehend you think me so. Please, sir, to sit. I am as much at a loss how to receive this honour as I ought, as I am surprised at your goodness in conferring it.

Barn. I thought you had expected me; I promised to come.

Mill. That is the more surprising; few men are such religious observers of their word.

Barn. All who are honest are.

Mill. To one another; but we simple women are seldom thought of consequence enough to gain a place in their remembrance.

[*Laying her hand on his, as by accident.*

Barn. Her disorder is so great, she don't perceive she has laid her hand on mine. Heavens! How she trembles!—What can this mean? [*Aside.*

Mill. The interest I have in all that relates to you (the reason of which you shall know hereafter) excites my curiosity; and, were I sure you would pardon my presumption, I should desire to know your real sentiments on a very particular subject.

Barn. Madam, you may command my poor thoughts on any subject. I have none that I would conceal.

Mill. You will think me bold.

Barn. No, indeed.

Mill. What, then, are your thoughts of love?

Barn. If you mean the love of women, I have not thought of it at all. My youth and circumstances make such thoughts improper in me yet. But if you mean the general love we owe to mankind, I think no one has more of it in his temper than myself. I do not know that person in the world, whose happiness I do not wish, and would not promote, were it in my power. In an especial manner I love my uncle, and my master; but, above all, my friend.

Mill. You have a friend, then, whom you love?

Barn. As he does me, sincerely.

Mill. He is, no doubt, often blessed with your company and conversation?

Barn. We live in one house, and both serve the same worthy merchant.

Mill. Happy, happy youth! Whoever thou art, I envy thee, and so must all, who see and know this youth. What have I lost, by being formed a woman! I hate my sex, myself. Had I been a man, I might, perhaps, have been as happy in your friendship, as he who now enjoys it is: but as it is—Oh!—

Barn. I never observed woman before; or this is, sure, the most beautiful of her sex. [*Aside.*] You seem disordered, madam—May I know the cause?

Mill. Do not ask me—I can never speak it, whatever is the cause. I wish for things impossible. I would be a servant, bound to the same master, to live in one house with you.

Barn. How strange, and yet how kind, her words and actions are! And the effect they have on me is as strange. I feel desires I never knew before. I must be gone, while I have power to go. [*Aside.*] Madam, I humbly take my leave.

Mill. You will not, sure, leave me so soon!

Barn. Indeed I must.

Mill. You cannot be so cruel! I have prepared a poor supper, at which I promised myself your company.

Barn. I am sorry I must refuse the honour you designed me; but my duty to my master calls me hence. I never yet neglected his service. He is so gentle, and so good a master, that, should I wrong him, though he might forgive me, I should never forgive myself.

Mill. Am I refused, by the first man, the second favour I ever stooped to ask? Go then, thou proud hard-hearted youth; but know, you are the only man that could be found, who would let me sue twice for greater favours.

Barn. What shall I do? How shall I go, or stay?

Mill. Yet do not, do not leave me. I with my sex's pride would meet your scorn; but when I look upon you, when I behold those eyes—Oh! spare my tongue, and let my blushes—this flood of tears too, that will force its way, declare—what woman's modesty should hide.

Barn. Oh, heavens! she loves me, worthless as I am. Her looks, her words, her flowing tears confess it. And can I leave her then? Oh, never, never!—Madam, dry up your tears: you shall command me always; I will stay here for ever, if you would have me.

Lucy. So: she has wheedled him out of his virtue of obedience already, and will strip him of all the rest, one after another, till she has left him as few as her ladyship, or myself. [*Aside.*

Mill. Now you are kind indeed! but I mean not to detain you always: I would have you shake off all slavish obedience to your master; but you may serve him still.

Lucy. Serve him still! Ay, or he'll have no opportunity of fingering his cash; and then he'll not serve your end, I'll be sworn. [*Aside.*

Enter BLUNT.

Blunt. Madam, supper's on the table.

Mill. Come, sir, you'll excuse all defects. My thoughts were too much employed on my guest, to observe the entertainment.

[*Exeunt* BARNWELL *and* MILLWOOD.

Blunt. What! is all this preparation, this elegant supper, variety of wines, and music, for the entertainment of that young fellow?

Lucy. So it seems.

Blunt. How! is our mistress turned fool at last? She's in love with him, I suppose.

Lucy. I suppose not. But she designs to make him in love with her, if she can.

Blunt. What will she get by that? He seems under age, and cannot be supposed to have much money.

Lucy. But his master has, and that's the same thing, as she will manage it.

Blunt. I do not like this fooling with a handsome young fellow: while she is endeavouring to ensnare him, she may be caught herself.

Lucy. Nay, were she like me, that would certainly be the consequence; for, I confess, there is something in youth and innocence that moves me mightily.

Blunt. Yes; so does the smoothness and plumpness of a partridge move a mighty desire in the hawk to be the destruction of it.

Lucy. Why, birds are their prey, and men are ours; though, as you observed, we are sometimes caught ourselves. But that, I dare say, will never be the case of our mistress.

Blunt. I wish it may prove so; for you know we all depend upon her. Should she trifle away her time with a young fellow that there is nothing to be got by, we must all starve.

Lucy. There is no danger of that; for I am sure she has no view in this affair but interest.

Blunt. Well, and what hopes are there of success in that?

Lucy. The most promising that can be. It is true the youth has his scruples; but she will soon teach him to answer them, by stifling his conscience. Oh, the lad is in a hopeful way, depend upon it. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Draws, and discovers BARNWELL *and* MILLWOOD *at supper. An entertainment of music and singing. After which they come forward.*

Barn. What can I answer? All that I know is, that you are fair, and I am miserable.

Mill. We are both so, and yet the fault is in ourselves.

Barn. To ease our present anguish by plunging into guilt, is to buy a moment's pleasure with an age of pain.

Mill. I should have thought the joys of love as lasting as they are great; if ours prove otherwise, it is your inconstancy must make them so.

Barn. The law of Heaven will not be reversed, and that requires us to govern our passions.

Mill. To give us sense of beauty and desires, and yet forbid us to taste and be happy, is a cruelty to nature. Have we passions only to torment us?

Barn. To hear you talk, though in the cause of vice; to gaze upon your beauty, press your hand, and see your snow-white bosom heave and fall, inflame my wishes; my pulse beats high, my senses all are in a hurry, and I am on the rack of wild desire.——Yet, for a moment's guilty pleasure, shall I lose my innocence, my peace of mind, and hopes of solid happiness?

Mill. Chimeras all!

Barn. I would not——yet must on——
Reluctant thus the merchant quits his ease,
And trusts to rocks and sands, and stormy seas!
In hopes some unknown golden coast to find,
Commits himself, though doubtful, to the wind,
Longs much for joys to come—yet mourns these left behind.

Mill. Along with me, and prove
No joys like woman-kind, no heaven like love.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* THOROWGOOD'S *House.*

Enter BARNWELL.

Barn. How strange are all things round me! Like some thief who treads forbidden ground, and fain would lurk unseen, fearful I enter each apartment of this well-known house. To guilty love, as if that were too little, already have I added breach of trust———A thief!——Can I know myself that wretched thing, and look my honest friend and injured master in the face?—Though hypocrisy may a while conceal my guilt, at length it will be known, and public shame and ruin must ensue. In the mean time, what must be my life? Ever to speak a language foreign to my heart; hourly to add to the number of my crimes, in order to conceal them. Sure such was the condition of the grand apostate, when first he lost his purity. Like me, disconsolate he wandered; and, while yet in heaven, bore all his future hell about him.

Enter TRUEMAN.

True. Barnwell! Oh! how I rejoice to see you safe! So will our master and his gentle daughter; who, during your absence, often enquired after you.

Barn. Would he were gone! His officious love will pry into the secrets of my soul. [*Aside.*

True. Unless you knew the pain the whole family has felt on your account, you cannot conceive how much you are beloved. But why thus cold and silent? When my heart is full of joy for your return, why do you turn away? why thus avoid me? What have I done? How am I altered since you saw me last? Or rather, what have you done? and why are you thus changed? for I am still the same.

Barn. What have I done, indeed! [*Aside.*

True. Not speak!—nor look upon me!—

Barn. By my face he will discover all I would conceal; methinks already I begin to hate him. [*Aside.*

True. I cannot bear this usage from a friend; one whom till now I ever found so loving;—whom yet I love; though this unkindness strikes at the root of friendship, and might destroy it in any breast but mine.

Barn. I am not well. [*Turning to him.*]—Sleep has been a stranger to these eyes since you beheld them last.

True. Heavy they look indeed, and swoln with tears;—now they overflow. Rightly did my sympathizing heart forebode last night, when thou wast absent, something fatal to our peace.

Barn. Your friendship engages you too far.—My troubles, whate'er they are, are mine alone: you have no interest in them, nor ought your concern for me to give you a moment's pain.

True. You speak as if you knew of friendship nothing but the name. Before I saw your grief, I felt it. Since we parted last I have slept no more than you, but pensive in my chamber sat alone, and spent the tedious night in wishes for your safety and return: even now, though ignorant of the cause, your sorrow wounds me to the heart.

Barn. 'Twill not be always thus. Friendship and all engagements cease, as circumstances and occasions vary; and, since you once may hate me, perhaps it might be better for us both that now you loved me less.

True. Sure I but dream! Without a cause would Barnwell use me thus? Ungenerous and ungrateful youth, farewell; I shall endeavour to follow your advice. [*Going.*] Yet stay; perhaps I am too rash, and angry when the cause demands compassion. Some unforeseen calamity may have befallen him, too great to bear.

Barn. What part am I reduced to act? It is vile and base to move his temper thus, the best of friends and men.

True. I am to blame; prithee, forgive me, Barnwell. Try to compose your ruffled mind; and let me know the cause that thus transports you from yourself; my friendly counsel may restore your peace.

Barn. All that is possible for man to do for man, your generous friendship may effect; but here even that is in vain.

True. Something dreadful is labouring in your breast; oh, give it vent, and let me share your grief! it will ease your pain, should it admit no cure, and make it lighter by the part I bear.

Barn. Vain supposition! my woes increase by being observed; should the cause be known, they would exceed all bounds.

True. So well I know thy honest heart, guilt cannot harbour there.

Barn. Oh, torture insupportable! [*Aside.*

True. Then why am I excluded? Have I a thought I would conceal from you?

Barn. If still you urge me on this hated subject, I will never enter more beneath this roof, nor see your face again.

True. It is strange—but I have done; say but you hate me not.

Barn. Hate you! I am not that monster yet.

True. Shall our friendship still continue?

Barn. It is a blessing I never was worthy of, yet now must stand on terms, and but upon conditions can confirm it.

True. What are they?

Barn. Never hereafter, though you should wonder at my conduct, desire to know more than I am willing to reveal.

True. It is hard; but upon any conditions I must be your friend.

Barn. Then, as much as one lost to himself can be another's, I am yours. [*Embracing.*

True. Be ever so, and may Heaven restore your peace!

Barn. Will yesterday return? We have heard the glorious sun, that till then incessant rolled, once stopped his rapid course, and once went back; the dead have risen, and parched rocks poured forth a liquid stream to quench a people's thirst; the sea divided, and formed walls of water, while a whole nation passed in safety through its sandy bosom; hungry lions have refused their prey; and men unhurt have walked amidst consuming flames; but never yet did time, once past, return.

True. Though the continued chain of time has never once been broke, nor ever will, but uninterrupted must keep on its course, till, lost in eternity, it ends where it first began; yet as Heaven can repair whatever evils time can bring upon us, we ought never to despair. But business requires our attendance; business, the youth's best preservative from ill, as idleness his worst of snares. Will you go with me?

Barn. I'll take a little time to reflect on what has past, and follow you. [*Exit* TRUEMAN.] I might have trusted Trueman, and engaged him to apply to my uncle to repair the wrong I have done my master; but what of Millwood? Must I expose her too? Ungenerous and base! Then Heaven requires it not. But Heaven requires

that I forsake her. What! never to see her more? Does Heaven require that? I hope I may see her, and Heaven not be offended. Presumptuous hope! Dearly already have I proved my frailty. Should I once more tempt Heaven, I may be left to fall, never to rise again. Yet, shall I leave her, for ever leave her, and not let her know the cause? She who loves me with such a boundless passion! Can cruelty be duty? I judge of what she then must feel, by what I now endure. The love of life, and fear of shame, opposed by inclination strong as death or shame, like wind and tide in raging conflict meeting, when neither can prevail, keep me in doubt.—How then can I determine?

Enter THOROWGOOD.

Thor. Without a cause assigned, or notice given, to absent yourself last night was a fault, young man, and I came to chide you for it; but hope I am prevented. That modest blush, the confusion so visible in your face, speak grief and shame. When we have offended Heaven, it requires no more; and shall man, who needs himself to be forgiven, be harder to appease? If my pardon or love be of moment to your peace, look up, secure of both.

Barn. This goodness has overcome me. [*Aside.*] Oh, sir, you know not the nature and extent of my offence; and I should abuse your mistaken bounty to receive it. Though I had rather die than speak my shame; though racks could not have forced the guilty secret from my breast, your kindness has.

Thor. Enough, enough, whatever it be; this concern shews you are convinced, and I am satisfied.—How painful is the sense of guilt to an ingenuous mind? Some youthful folly, which it were prudent not to inquire into. When we consider the frail condition of humanity, it may raise our pity, not our wonder, that youth should go astray; when reason, weak at the best, opposed to inclination, scarce formed, and wholly unassisted by experience, faintly contends, or willingly becomes the slave of sense. The state of youth is much to be deplored, and the more so, because they see it not; being then to danger most exposed, when they are least prepared for their defence. [*Aside.*

Barn. It will be known, and you will recall your pardon and abhor me.

Thor. I never will. Yet be upon your guard in this gay thoughtless season of your life; when the sense of pleasure is quick, and passions high, the voluptuous appetites, raging and fierce, demand the strongest curb; take heed of a relapse; when vice becomes habitual, the very power of leaving it is lost.

Barn. Hear me, on my knees, confess——

Thor. Not a syllable more upon this subject; it were not mercy, but cruelty, to hear what must give such torment to reveal.

Barn. This generosity amazes and distracts me.

Thor. This remorse makes thee dearer to me than if thou hadst never offended. Whatever is your fault, of this I am certain, 'twas harder for you to offend, than for me to pardon.

[*Exit* THOROWGOOD.

Barn. Villain, villain, villain! basely to wrong so excellent a man! Should I again return to folly? Detested thought!—But what of Millwood then?—Why, I renounce her;—I give her up—The struggle's over, and virtue has prevailed. Reason may convince, but gratitude compels. This unlooked-for generosity has saved me from destruction. [*Going.*

Enter a Footman.

Foot. Sir, two ladies from your uncle in the country desire to see you.

Barn. Who should they be? [*Aside.*] Tell them I'll wait upon them. Methinks I dread to see them.—Now every thing alarms me.—Guilt, what a coward hast thou made me! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Another Room in* THOROWGOOD'S *House.*

Enter MILLWOOD, LUCY, *and a Footman.*

Foot. Ladies, he will wait upon you immediately.

Mill. 'Tis very well.—I thank you.

[*Exit Foot.*

Enter BARNWELL.

Barn. Confusion! Millwood!

Mill. That angry look tells me that here I am an unwelcome guest. I feared as much; the unhappy are so every where.

Barn. Will nothing but my utter ruin content you?

Mill. Unkind and cruel! Lost myself, your happiness is now my only care.

Barn. How did you gain admission?

Mill. Saying we were desired by your uncle to visit, and deliver a message to you, we were received by the family without suspicion, and with much respect conducted here.

Barn. Why did you come at all?

Mill. I never shall trouble you more. I'm come to take my leave for ever. Such is the malice of my fate: I go hopeless, despairing ever to return. This hour is all I have left: one short hour is all I have to bestow on love and you, for whom I thought the longest life too short.

Barn. Then we are met to part for ever?

Mill. It must be so. Yet think not that time or absence shall ever put a period to my grief, or make me love you less. Though I must leave you, yet condemn me not.

Barn. Condemn you! No, I approve your resolution, and rejoice to hear it; it is just—it is necessary—I have well weighed, and found it so.

Lucy. I am afraid the young man has more sense than she thought he had. [*Aside.*

Barn. Before you came, I had determined never to see you more.

Mill. Confusion! [*Aside.*

Lucy. Ay, we are all out; this is a turn so unexpected, that I shall make nothing of my part.

They must e'en play the scene betwixt themselves. [*Aside.*

Mill. It was some relief to think, though absent, you would love me still; but to find, though fortune had been indulgent, that you, more cruel and inconstant, had resolved to cast me off—This, as I never could expect, I have not learned to bear.

Barn. I am sorry to hear you blame me in a resolution that so well becomes us both.

Mill. I have reason for what I do, but you have none.

Barn. Can we want a reason for parting, who have so many to wish we never had met?

Mill. Look on me, Barnwell. Am I deformed or old, that satiety so soon succeeds enjoyment? Nay, look again; am I not she whom yesterday you thought the fairest and the kindest of her sex; whose hand, trembling with extasy, you pressed and moulded thus, while on my eyes you gazed with such delight, as if desire increased by being fed?

Barn. No more; let me repent my former follies, if possible, without remembering what they were.

Mill. Why?

Barn. Such is my frailty, that it is dangerous.

Mill. Where is the danger, since we are to part?

Barn. The thought of that already is too painful.

Mill. If it be painful to part, then I may hope, at least, you do not hate me?

Barn. No—no—I never said I did——Oh, my heart!

Mill. Perhaps you pity me?

Barn. I do—I do—Indeed I do.

Mill. You'll think upon me?

Barn. Doubt it not, while I can think at all.

Mill. You may judge an embrace at parting too great a favour—though it would be the last. [*He draws back.*] A look shall then suffice—Farewell—for ever.

[*Exeunt* Millwood *and* Lucy.

Barn. If to resolve to suffer be to conquer,—I have conquered—Painful victory!

Re-enter Millwood *and* Lucy.

Mill. One thing I had forgot;—I never must return to my own house again. This I thought proper to let you know, lest your mind should change, and you should seek in vain to find me there. Forgive me this second intrusion; I only came to give you this caution, and that, perhaps, was needless.

Barn. I hope it was; yet it is kind, and I must thank you for it.

Mill. My friend, your arm. [*To* Lucy.] Now, I am gone for ever. [*Going.*

Barn. One thing more—Sure there is no danger in my knowing where you go? If you think otherwise—

Mill. Alas! [*Weeping.*

Lucy. We are right, I find; that's my cue. [*Aside.*] Ah, dear sir! she is going she knows not whither; but go she must.

Barn. Humanity obliges me to wish you well: why will you thus expose yourself to needless troubles?

Lucy. Nay, there is no help for it: she must quit the town immediately, and the kingdom as soon as possible. It was no small matter, you may be sure, that could make her resolve to leave you.

Mill. No more, my friend; since he, for whose dear sake alone I suffer, and am content to suffer, is kind and pities me; wherever I wander, through wilds and deserts benighted and forlorn, that thought shall give me comfort.

Barn. For my sake!—Oh, tell me how, which way am I so cursed to bring such ruin on thee?

Mill. No matter; I am contented with my lot.

Barn. Leave me not in this uncertainty.

Mill. I have said too much.

Barn. How, how am I the cause of your undoing?

Mill. To know it will but increase your troubles.

Barn. My troubles cannot be greater than they are.

Lucy. Well, sir, if she will not satisfy you, I will.

Barn. I am bound to you beyond expression.

Mill. Remember, sir, that I desired you not to hear it.

Barn. Begin, and ease my racking expectation.

Lucy. Why, you must know, my lady here was an only child, and her parents dying while she was young, left her and her fortune (no inconsiderable one, I assure you) to the care of a gentleman who has a good estate of his own.

Mill. Ay, ay, the barbarous man is rich enough; but what are riches when compared to love?

Lucy. For a while he performed the office of a faithful guardian, settled her in a house, hired her servants,—but you have seen in what manner she lived, so I need say no more of that.

Mill. How I shall live hereafter, Heaven knows!

Lucy. All things went on as one could wish; till some time ago, his wife dying, he fell violently in love with his charge, and would fain have married her. Now the man is neither old nor ugly, but a good personable sort of a man; but I do not know how it was, she could never endure him. In short, her ill usage so provoked him, that he brought in an account of his executorship, wherein he makes her debtor to him——

Mill. A trifle in itself, but more than enough to ruin me, whom, by this unjust account, he had stripped of all before.

Lucy. Now, she having neither money nor friend, except me, who am as unfortunate as herself, he compelled her to pass his account, and give her bond for the sum he demanded; but still provided handsomely for her, and continued his courtship, till, being informed by his spies (truly I suspect some in her own family,) that you were entertained at her house, and staid with her all night, he came this morning raving and storming like a madman, talks no more of marriage (so there is no hope of making up matters that way,

but vows her ruin, unless she shall allow him the same favour that he supposes she granted you.

Barn. Must she be ruined, or find her refuge in another's arms?

Mill. He gave me but an hour to resolve in; that is happily spent with you—And now I go—

Barn. To be exposed to all the rigour of the various seasons; the summer's parching heat, and winter's cold: unhoused, to wander friendless through the inhospitable world, in misery and want; attended with fear and danger, and pursued by malice and revenge! Wouldst thou endure all this for me, and can I do nothing, nothing, to prevent it?

Lucy. It is really a pity there can be no way found out.

Barn. Oh, where are all my resolutions now? Like early vapours, or the morning dew, chased by the sun's warm beams, they are vanished and lost, as though they had never been.

Lucy. Now I advised her, sir, to comply with the gentleman: that would not only put an end to her troubles, but make her fortune at once.

Barn. Tormenting fiend, away! I had rather perish, nay, see her perish, than have her saved by him. I will, myself, prevent her ruin, though with my own. A moment's patience; I'll return immediately. [*Exit* BARNWELL.

Lucy. It was well you came, or, by what I can perceive, you had lost him.

Mill. That, I must confesss, was a danger I did not foresee; I was only afraid he should have come without money. You know, a house of entertainment, like mine, is not kept without expence.

Lucy. That is very true, but then you should be reasonable in your demands; 'tis pity to discourage a young man.

Mill. Leave that to me.

Re-enter BARNWELL, *with a bag of money.*

Barn. What am I about to do?—Now, you, who boast your reason all-sufficient, suppose yourselves in my condition, and determine for me; whether it is right to let her suffer for my faults, or, by this small addition to my guilt, prevent the ill effects of what is past.

Lucy. These young sinners think every thing in the way of wickedness so strange! But I could tell him, that this is nothing but what is very common; for one vice as naturally begets another, as a father a son. But he will find out that himself, if he lives long enough. [*Aside.*

Barn. Here, take this, and with it purchase your deliverance; return to your house, and live in peace and safety.

Mill. So I may hope to see you there again?

Barn. Answer me not, but fly, lest in the agonies of my remorse, I take again what is not mine to give, and abandon thee to want and misery.

Mill. Say but you will come!

Barn. You are my fate, my heaven or my hell; only leave me now, dispose of me hereafter as you please. [*Exeunt* MILLWOOD *and* LUCY.

What have I done? Were my resolutions founded on reason, and sincerely made? Why, then, has Heaven suffered me to fall? I sought not the occasion; and, if my heart deceives me not, compassion and generosity were my motives. Is virtue inconsistent with itself, or are vice and virtue only empty names; or do they depend on accidents, beyond our power to produce, or to prevent; wherein we have no part, and yet must be determined by the event? But why should I attempt to reason? All is confusion, horror, and remorse! I find I am lost, cast down from all my late-erected hope, and plunged again in guilt, yet scarce know how or why!

Such undistinguished horrors make my brain,
Like hell, the seat of darkness and of pain.

[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* THOROWGOOD'S *House.*

THOROWGOOD *and* TRUEMAN *discovered (with Account Books) sitting at a Table.*

Thor. Methinks I would not have you only learn the method of merchandise, and practise it hereafter, merely as a means of getting wealth: it will be well worth your pains to study it as a science, to see how it is founded in reason and the nature of things: how it promotes humanity, as it has opened, and yet keeps up an intercourse between nations, far remote from one another in situation, customs, and religion; promoting arts, industry, peace, and plenty: by mutual benefits diffusing mutual love from pole to pole.

True. Something of this I have considered, and hope, by your assistance, to extend my thoughts much farther. I have observed those countries, where trade is promoted and encouraged, do not make discoveries to destroy, but to improve mankind by love and friendship; to tame the fierce, and polish the most savage; to teach them the advantage of honest traffic, by taking from them, with their own consent, their useless superfluities, and giving them, in return, what, from their ignorance in manual arts, their situation, or some other accident, they stand in need of.

Thor. It is justly observed: the populous east, luxuriant, abounds with glittering gems, bright pearls, aromatic spices, and health-restoring drugs: the late found western world's rich earth glows with unnumbered veins of gold and silver ore. On every climate, and on every country, Heaven has bestowed some good peculiar to itself. It is the industrious merchant's business to collect the various blessings of each soil and climate; and, with the product of the whole, to en-

rich his native country.—Well, I have examined your accounts; they are not only just, as I have always found them, but regularly kept, and fairly entered. I commend your diligence. Method in business is the surest guide; he, who neglects it, frequently stumbles, and always wanders perplexed, uncertain, and in danger.—Are Barnwell's accounts ready for my inspection? He does not use to be the last on these occasions.

True. Upon receiving your orders he retired, I thought in some confusion. If you please, I'll go and hasten him. I hope he has not been guilty of any neglect.

Thor. I am now going to the Exchange; let him know, at my return I expect to find him ready.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter MARIA *with a book. Sits and reads.*

Mar. How forcible is truth! The weakest mind, inspired with love of that, fixed and collected in itself, with indifference beholds the united force of earth and hell opposing. Such souls are raised above the sense of pain, or so supported, that they regard it not. The martyr cheaply purchases his heaven; small are his sufferings, great is his reward. Not so the wretch who combats love with duty; whose mind, weakened and dissolved by the soft passion, feeble and hopeless, opposes his own desires—What is an hour, a day, a year of pain, to a whole life of tortures such as these?

Enter TRUEMAN.

True. Oh, Barnwell! oh, my friend! how art thou fallen!

Mar. Ha! Barnwell! What of him! Speak, say, what of Barnwell?

True. It is not to be concealed: I have news to tell of him, that will afflict your generous father, yourself, and all who know him.

Mar. Defend us, Heaven!

True. I cannot speak it. See there.

[*Gives a letter.*

Mar. [*Reads.*] 'I know my absence will surprise my honoured master and yourself; and the more, when you shall understand, that the reason of my withdrawing, is my having embezzled part of the cash with which I was entrusted. After this, it is needless to inform you, that I intend never to return again. Though this might have been known, by examining my accounts; yet, to prevent that unnecessary trouble, and to cut off all fruitless expectations of my return, I have left this from the lost

GEORGE BARNWELL.'

True. Lost indeed! Yet how he should be guilty of what he there charges himself withal, raises my wonder equal to my grief. Never had youth a higher sense of virtue. Justly he thought, and as he thought he practised; never was life more regular than his.—An understanding uncommon at his years, an open, generous manliness of temper, his manners easy, unaffected, and engaging.

Mar. This, and much more, you might have said with truth. He was the delight of every eye, and joy of every heart that knew him.

True. Since such he was, and was my friend, can I support his loss? See, the fairest, happiest maid this wealthy city boasts, kindly condescends to weep for thy unhappy fate, poor, ruined Barnwell!

Mar. Trueman, do you think a soul, so delicate as his, so sensible of shame, can ever submit to live a slave to vice?

True. Never, never. So well I know him, I am sure this act of his, so contrary to his nature, must have been caused by some unavoidable necessity.

Mar. Is there no means yet to preserve him?

True. Oh, that there were! but few men recover their reputation lost, a merchant never. Nor would he, I fear, though I should find him, ever be brought to look his injured master in the face.

Mar. I fear as much, and therefore would never have my father know it.

True. That is impossible.

Mar. What is the sum?

True. It is considerable; I have marked it here, to shew it, with the letter, to your father, at his return.

Mar. If I should supply the money, could you so dispose of that, and the account, as to conceal this unhappy mismanagement from my father?

True. Nothing more easy. But can you intend it?—Will you save a helpless wretch from ruin?—Oh, it were an act worthy such exalted virtue as Maria's! Sure Heaven, in mercy to my friend, inspired the generous thought.

Mar. Doubt not, but I would purchase so great a happiness at a much dearer price. But how shall he be found?

True. Trust to my diligence for that In the mean time, I will conceal his absence from your father, or find such excuses for it, that the real cause shall never be suspected.

Mar. In attempting to save from shame, one who we hope may yet return to virtue, to Heaven, and you, the only witnesses of this action, I appeal, whether I do any thing unbecoming my sex and character?

True. Earth must approve the deed, and Heaven, I doubt not, will reward it.

Mar. If Heaven succeeds it, I am well rewarded. A virgin's fame is sullied by suspicion's lightest breath; and, therefore, as this must be a secret from my father, and the world, for Barnwell's sake, for mine, let it be so to him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in* MILLWOOD'S *House.*

Enter LUCY *and* BLUNT.

Lucy. Well, what do you think of Millwood's conduct now?

Blunt. I own it is surprising: I do not know which to admire most, her feigned, or his real passion; though I have sometimes been afraid

that her avarice would discover her. But his youth and want of experience make it the easier to impose on him.

Lucy. No, it is his love. To do him justice, notwithstanding his youth, he does not want understanding. But you men are much easier imposed on in these affairs, than your vanity will allow you to believe. Let me see the wisest of you all as much in love with me as Barnwell is with Millwood, and I will engage to make as great a fool of him.

Blunt. And, all circumstances considered, to make as much money of him too?

Lucy. I cannot answer for that. Her artifice, in making him rob his master at first, and the various stratagems by which she has obliged him to continue that course, astonish even me, who know her so well.

Blunt. But then you are to consider that the money was his master's.

Lucy. There was the difficulty of it. Had it been his own, it had been nothing. Were the world his, she might have it for a smile. But those golden days are done: he is ruined, and Millwood's hopes of farther profits there are at an end.

Blunt. That is no more than we all expected.

Lucy. Being called by his master to make up his accounts, he was forced to quit his house and service, and wisely flies to Millwood for relief and entertainment.

Blunt. I have not heard of this before: how did she receive him?

Lucy. As you would expect. She wondered what he meant, was astonished at his impudence, and, with an air of modesty peculiar to herself, swore so heartily that she never saw him before, that she put me out of countenance.

Blunt. That is much indeed! But how did Barnwell behave?

Lucy. He grieved; and at length, enraged at this barbarous treatment, was preparing to be gone; and, making towards the door, shewed a sum of money, which he had brought from his master's, the last he is ever likely to have from thence.

Blunt. But then, Millwood——

Lucy. Ay, she, with her usual address, returned to her old arts of lying, swearing, and dissembling; hung on his neck, wept, and swore it was meant in jest.—The amorous youth melted into tears, threw the money into her lap, and swore he had rather die than think her false.

Blunt. Strange infatuation!

Lucy. But what ensued was stranger still. As doubts and fears, followed by reconcilement, ever increase love where the passion is sincere; so in him it caused so wild a transport of excessive fondness, such joy, such grief, such pleasure, and such anguish, that nature seemed sinking with the weight, and his charmed soul disposed to quit his breast for hers. Just then, when every passion with lawless anarchy prevailed, and reason was in the raging tempest lost, the cruel, artful Millwood prevailed upon the wretched youth to promise—what I tremble but to think of.

Blunt. I am amazed! What can it be?

Lucy. You will be more so, to hear it is to attempt the life of his nearest relation, and best benefactor.

Blunt. His uncle! whom we have often heard him speak of as a gentleman of a large estate, and fair character, in the country where he lives?

Lucy. The same. She was no sooner possessed of the last dear purchase of his ruin, but her avarice, insatiate as the grave, demanded this horrid sacrifice. Barnwell's near relation, and unsuspected virtue, must give too easy means to seize this good man's treasure; whose blood must seal the dreadful secret, and prevent the terrors of her guilty fears.

Blunt. Is it possible she could persuade him to do an act like that? He is by nature honest, grateful, compassionate, and generous; and though his love, and her artful persuasions, have wrought him to practise what he most abhors; yet we all can witness for him, with what reluctance he has still complied: so many tears he shed over each offence, as might, if possible, sanctify theft, and make a merit of a crime.

Lucy. 'Tis true, at the naming of the murder of his uncle, he started into rage; and, breaking from her arms (where she till then had held him with well-dissembled love, and false endearments,) called her cruel, monster, devil, and told her she was born for his destruction. She thought it not for her purpose to meet his rage with her rage, but affected a most passionate fit of grief, railed at her fate, and cursed her wayward stars, that still her wants should force her to press him to act such deeds, as she must needs abhor as well as he. She told him necessity had no law, and love no bounds; that therefore he never truly loved, but meant, in her necessity, to forsake her. Then she kneeled, and swore, that, since by his refusal he had given her cause to doubt his love, she never would see him more, unless, to prove it true, he robbed his uncle to supply her wants, and murdered him to keep it from discovery.

Blunt. I am astonished. What said he?

Lucy. Speechless he stood: but in his face you might have read, that various passions tore his very soul. Oft he in anguish threw his eyes towards heaven, and then as often bent their beams on her; then wept and groaned, and beat his troubled breast: at length, with horror not to be expressed, he cried,—'Thou cursed fair, have I 'not given dreadful proofs of love? What drew 'me from my youthful innocence, and stained 'my then unspotted soul, but love? What caused 'me to rob my worthy, gentle master, but cursed 'love? What makes me now a fugitive from his 'service, loathed by myself, and scorned by all 'the world, but love? What fills my eyes with 'tears, my soul with torture never felt on this side 'death before? Why love, love, love! And why, 'above all, do I resolve (for, tearing his hair, he 'cried, I do resolve) to kill my uncle?'

Blunt. Was she not moved? It makes me weep to hear the sad relation.

Lucy. Yes, with joy, that she had gained her point. She gave him no time to cool, but urged him to attempt it instantly. He is now gone. If he performs it, and escapes, there is more money for her; if not, he will never return, and then she is fairly rid of him.

Blunt. It is time the world were rid of such a monster.

Lucy. If we do not use our endeavours to prevent the murder, we are as bad as she.

Blunt. I am afraid it is too late.

Lucy. Perhaps not. Her barbarity to Barnwell makes me hate her. We have run too great a length with her already. I did not think her or myself so wicked as I find, upon reflection, we are.

Blunt. It is true, we have been all too much so. But there is something so horrid in murder, that all other crimes seem nothing when compared to that: I would not be involved in the guilt of it for all the world.

Lucy. Nor I, Heaven knows. Therefore let us clear ourselves, by doing all that is in our power to prevent it. I have just thought of a way that to me seems probable. Will you join with me to detect this cursed design?

Blunt. With all my heart. He, who knows of a murder intended to be committed, and does not discover it, in the eye of the law and reason, is a murderer.

Lucy. Let us lose no time; I will acquaint you with the particulars as we go. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A Walk at some Distance from a Country Seat.*

Enter BARNWELL.

Barn. A dismal gloom obscures the face of day. Either the sun has slipped behind a cloud, or journeys down the west of heaven with more than common speed, to avoid the sight of what I am doomed to act. Since I set forth on this accursed design, where'er I tread, methinks the solid earth trembles beneath my feet. Murder my uncle!——Yonder limpid stream, whose hoary fall has made a natural cascade, as I passed by, in doleful accents seemed to murmur——Murder! The earth, the air, and water seemed concerned. But that is not strange: the world is punished, and nature feels a shock, when Providence permits a good man's fall. Just Heaven! then what should I feel for him that was my father's only brother, and since his death has been to me a father; that took me up an infant and an orphan, reared me with tenderest care, and still indulged me with most paternal fondness! Yet here I stand his destined murderer—I stiffen with horror at my own impiety——It is yet unperformed—What if I quit my bloody purpose, and fly the place? [*Going, then stops.*]——But whither, oh, whither shall I fly? My master's once friendly doors are ever shut against me; and without money Millwood will never see me more; and she has got such firm possession of my heart, and governs there with such despotic sway, that life is not to be endured without her. Ay, there is the cause of all my sin and sorrow! it is more than love; it is the fever of the soul, and madness of desire. In vain does nature, reason, conscience, all oppose it; the impetuous passion bears down all before it, and drives me on to lust, to theft, and murder. Oh, conscience, feeble guide to virtue! thou only shewest us when we go astray, but wantest power to stop us in our course!——Ha! in yonder shady walk I see my uncle——He is alone——Now for my disguise. [*Plucks out a vizor.*]—This is his hour of private meditation. Thus daily he prepares his soul for Heaven; while I—But what have I to do with Heaven? Ha! no struggles, conscience—

Hence, hence remorse, and every thought that's good;
The storm, that lust began, must end in blood.

[*Puts on the vizor, draws a pistol, and exit.*

SCENE IV.—*A close Walk in a Wood.*

Enter Uncle.

Unc. If I were superstitious, I should fear some danger lurked unseen, or death were nigh. A heavy melancholy clouds my spirits. My imagination is filled with ghastly forms of dreary graves, and bodies changed by death; when the pale lengthened visage attracts each weeping eye, and fills the musing soul at once with grief and horror, pity and aversion. I will indulge the thought. The wise man prepares himself for death, by making it familiar to his mind. When strong reflections hold the mirror near, and the living in the dead behold their future self, how does each inordinate passion and desire cease, or sicken at the view! The mind scarce moves; the blood, curdling and chilled, creeps slowly through the veins: fixed, still, and motionless, we stand, so like the solemn objects of our thoughts, we are almost at present what we must be hereafter; till curiosity awakes the soul, and sets it on enquiry.

Enter BARNWELL, *at a distance.*

Oh, death! thou strange, mysterious power, seen every day, yet never understood, but by the incommunicative dead, what art thou? The extensive mind of man, that with a thought circles the earth's vast globe, sinks to the centre, or ascends above the stars; that worlds exotic finds, or thinks it finds, thy thick clouds attempts to pass in vain; lost and bewildered in the horrid gloom, defeated, she returns more doubtful than before, of nothing certain but of labour lost.

[*During this speech,* BARNWELL *sometimes presents the pistol, and draws it back again.*

Barn. Oh! 'tis impossible.

[*Throwing down the pistol.*

[*Uncle starts, and attempts to draw his sword.*

Unc. A man so near me! Armed and masked——

Barn. Nay, then, there's no retreat.

[*Plucks a poignard from his bosom, and stabs him.*

Unc. Oh! I am slain. All gracious Heaven, regard the prayer of thy dying servant! bless, with thy choicest blessings, my dearest nephew! forgive my murderer, and take my fleeting soul to endless mercy!

[BARNWELL *throws off his mask, runs to him, and, kneeling by him, raises and chafes him.*

Barn. Expiring saint! Oh, murdered, martyred uncle! lift up your dying eyes, and view your nephew in your murderer——Oh, do not look so tenderly upon me!——Let indignation lighten from your eyes, and blast me ere you die.——By Heaven, he weeps, in pity of my woes.——Tears, tears for blood!——The murdered, in the agonies of death, weeps for his murderer.——Oh, speak your pious purpose; pronounce my pardon then, and take me with you.——He would, but cannot——Oh, why, with such fond affection, do you press my murdering hand?——[*Uncle sighs and dies.*]——What, will you kiss me?——Life, that hovered on his lips but till he had sealed my pardon, in that sigh expired.——He is gone for ever, and, oh! I follow.——[*Swoons away upon his uncle's dead body.*]——Do I still breathe, and taint with my infectious breath the wholesome air?——Let Heaven, from its high throne, in justice or in mercy, now look down on that dear murdered saint, and me the murderer, and if his vengeance spares, let pity strike and end my wretched being.——Murder the worst of crimes, and parricide the worst of murders, and this the worst of parricides!——Cain, who stands on record from the birth of time, and must to its last final period, as accursed, slew a brother favoured above him: detested Nero, by another's hand, dispatched a mother that he feared and hated: but I, with my own hand, have murdered a brother, mother, father, and a friend, most loving and beloved.——This execrable act of mine is without a parallel.——Oh, may it ever stand alone, the last of murders, as it is the worst!

The rich man thus, in torment and despair,
Preferred his vain, his charitable prayer.
The fool, his own soul lost, would fain be wise
For others' good, but Heaven his suit denies.
By laws and means well-known we stand or fall,
And one eternal rule remains for all. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room* in THOROWGOOD'S *House.*

Enter MARIA *and* TRUEMAN.

Mar. How falsely do they judge, who censure or applaud, as we are afflicted or rewarded here! I know I am unhappy; yet cannot charge myself with any crime, more than the common frailties of our kind, that should provoke just Heaven to mark me out for sufferings so uncommon and severe. Falsely to accuse ourselves, Heaven must abhor. Then it is just and right that innocence should suffer; for Heaven must be just in all its ways. Perhaps by that we are kept from moral evils, much worse than penal, or more improved in virtue. Or may not the lesser evils that we sustain, be made the means of greater good to others? Might all the joyless days and sleepless nights that I have passed, but purchase peace for thee!

Thou dear, dear cause of all my grief and pain,
Small were the loss and infinite the gain,
Though to the grave in secret love I pine,
So life and fame, and happiness were thine!

What news of Barnwell?

True. None; I have sought him with the greatest diligence, but all in vain.

Mar. Does my father yet suspect the cause of his absence?

True. All appeared so just and fair to him, it is not possible he ever should. But his absence will no longer be concealed. Your father is wise; and though he seems to hearken to the friendly excuses I would make for Barnwell, yet I am afraid he regards them only as such, without suffering them to influence his judgment.

Mar. How does the unhappy youth defeat all our designs to serve him! Yet I can never repent what we have done. Should he return, 'twill make his reconciliation with my father easier, and preserve him from the future reproach of a malicious, unforgiving world.

Enter THOROWGOOD *and* LUCY.

Thor. This woman here has given me a sad, and, abating some circumstances, too probable an account of Barnwell's defection.

Lucy. I am sorry, sir, that my frank confession of my former unhappy course of life should cause you to suspect my truth on this occasion.

Thor. It is not that; your confession has in it all the appearance of truth. Among many other particulars, she informs me, that Barnwell has been influenced to break his trust, and wrong me, at several times, of considerable sums of money. Now, as I know this to be false, I would fain doubt the whole of her relation, too dreadful to be willingly believed.

Mar. Sir, your pardon; I find myself on a sudden so indisposed that I must retire.—Providence opposes all attempts to save him. Poor ruined Barnwell! Wretched, lost Maria! [*Aside. Exit.*

Thor. How am I distressed on every side! Pity for that unhappy youth, fear for the life of a much valued friend—and then my child—the only joy and hope of my declining life!——Her melancholy increases hourly, and gives me pain-

ful apprehensions of her loss.——Oh, Trueman, this person informs me that your friend, at the instigation of an impious woman, is gone to rob and murder his venerable uncle!

True. Oh, execrable deed! I am blasted with horror at the thought.

Lucy. This delay may ruin all.

Thor. What to do or think I know not. That he ever wronged me, I know, is false; the rest may be so too; there is all my hope.

True. Trust not to that; rather suppose all true, than lose a moment's time. Even now the horrid deed may be doing—dreadful imagination!——or it may be done, and we be vainly debating on the means to prevent what is already past.

Thor. This earnestness convinces me, that he knows more than he has yet discovered. What, ho! without there! who waits?

Enter a Servant.

Order the groom to saddle the swiftest horse, and prepare to set out with speed; an affair of life and death demands his diligence. [*Exit Servant.*] For you, whose behaviour on this occasion I have no time to commend as it deserves, I must engage your further assistance. Return, and observe this Millwood till I come. I have your directions, and will follow you as soon as possible. [*Exit* LUCY.] Trueman, you, I am sure, will not be idle on this occasion. [*Exit* THOR.

True. He only, who is a friend, can judge of my distress. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—MILLWOOD'S *House.*

Enter MILLWOOD.

Mill. I wish I knew the event of his design. The attempt without success would ruin him. Well; what have I to apprehend from that? I fear, too much. The mischief being only intended, his friends, through pity of his youth, turn all their rage on me. I should have thought of that before. Suppose the deed done; then, and then only, I shall be secure.—Or what if he returns without attempting it at all!——

Enter BARNWELL *bloody.*

But he is here, and I have done him wrong. His bloody hands shew he has done the deed, but shew he wants the prudence to conceal it.

Barn. Where shall I hide me? Whither shall I fly, to avoid the swift unerring hand of justice?

Mill. Dismiss your fears: though thousands had pursued you to the door, yet, being entered here, you are as safe as innocence. I have a cavern, by art so cunningly contrived, that the piercing eyes of jealousy and revenge may search in vain, nor find the entrance to the safe retreat. There will I hide you, if any danger's near.

Barn. Oh, hide me——from myself, if it be possible; for while I bear my conscience in my bosom, though I were hid where man's eye never saw me, nor light ever dawned, it were all in vain. For, oh! that inmate, that impartial judge, will try, convict, and sentence me for murder, and execute me with never-ending torments. Behold these hands, all crimsoned over with my dear uncle's blood! Here is a sight to make a statue start with horror, or turn a living man into a statue!

Mill. Ridiculous! Then it seems you are afraid of your own shadow, or, what is less than a shadow, your conscience!

Barn. Though to man unknown I did the accursed act, what can we hide from Heaven's all-seeing eye?

Mill. No more of this stuff. What advantage have you made of his death; or what advantage may yet be made of it? Did you secure the keys of his treasure, which, no doubt, were about him? What gold, what jewels, or what else of value have you brought me?

Barn. Think you I added sacrilege to murder? Oh! had you seen him, as his life flowed from him in a crimson flood, and heard him praying for me by the double name of nephew and of murderer—(alas, alas! he knew not then, that his nephew was his murderer!)—how would you have wished, as I did, though you had a thousand years of life to come, to have given them all to have lengthened his one hour! But, being dead, I fled the sight of what my hands had done; nor could I, to have gained the empire of the world, have violated, by theft, his sacred corpse.

Mill. Whining, preposterous, canting villain! to murder your uncle, rob him of life, nature's first, last, dear prerogative, after which there is no injury—then fear to take what he no longer wanted, and bring to me your penury and guilt! Do you think I will hazard my reputation, nay, life, to entertain you?

Barn. Oh, Millwood!——this from thee!—But I have done. If you hate me, if you wish me dead, then are you happy; for, oh! it is sure my grief will quickly end me.

Mill. In his madness he will discover all, and involve me in his ruin. We are on a precipice, from whence there is no retreat for both—Then to preserve myself——[*Pauses.*]——There is no other way.——It is dreadful, but reflection comes too late when danger is pressing, and there is no room for choice.——It must be done—[*Aside. Rings a bell, enter a Servant.*]—Fetch me an officer, and seize this villain. He has confessed himself a murderer. Should I let him escape, I might justly be thought as bad as he.

[*Exit Servant.*

Barn. Oh, Millwood! sure you do not, you cannot mean it. Stop the messenger; upon my knees, I beg you would call him back. It is fit I die indeed, but not by you. I will this instant deliver myself into the hands of justice, indeed I will; for death is all I wish. But thy ingratitude so tears my wounded soul, it is worse ten thousand times than death with torture.

Mill. Call it what you will; I am willing to live, and live secure, which nothing but your death can warrant.

Barn. If there be a pitch of wickedness that

sets the author beyond the reach of vengeance, you must be secure. But what remains for me, but a dismal dungeon, hard galling fetters, an aweful trial, and an ignominious death, justly to fall unpitied and abhorred! after death to be suspended between heaven and earth, a dreadful spectacle, the warning and horror of a gaping crowd! This I could bear, nay, wish not to avoid, had it but come from any hand but thine.

Enter BLUNT, *Officer, and Attendants.*

Mill. Heaven defend me! Conceal a murderer! Here, sir, take this youth into your custody. I accuse him of murder, and will appear to make good my charge. [*They seize him.*

Barn. To whom, of what, or how shall I complain? I will not accuse her. The hand of Heaven is in it, and this the punishment of lust and parricide. Yet Heaven, that justly cuts me off, still suffers her to live; perhaps to punish others. Tremendous mercy! So fiends are cursed with immortality, to be the executioners of Heaven!

Be warned, ye youths, who see my sad despair:
Avoid lewd women, false as they are fair.
By reason guided, honest joys pursue:
The fair, to honour and to virtue true,
Just to herself, will ne'er be false to you.
By my example learn to shun my fate:
(How wretched is the man who's wise too late!)
Ere innocence, and fame, and life, be lost,
Here purchase wisdom cheaply, at my cost.

[*Exeunt* BARNWELL, *Officer, and Attendants.*

Mill. Where is Lucy? Why is she absent at such a time?

Blunt. Would I had been so too! Lucy will soon be here; and I hope to thy confusion, thou devil!

Mill. Insolent! This to me?

Blunt. The worst that we know of the devil is, that he first seduces to sin, and then betrays to punishment. [*Exit.*

Mill. They disapprove of my conduct then, and mean to set up for themselves.——My ruin is resolved.——I see my danger, but scorn both it and them. I was not born to fall by such weak instruments. [*Going.*

Enter THOROWGOOD.

Thor. Where is the scandal of her own sex, and curse of ours?

Mill. What means this insolence! Whom do you seek?

Thor. Millwood.

Mill. Well, you have found her then. I am Millwood.

Thor. Then you are the most impious wretch that ever the sun beheld.

Mill. From your appearance, I should have expected wisdom and moderation; but your manners belie your aspect. What is your business here? I know you not.

Thor. Hereafter you may know me better; I am Barnwell's master.

Mill. Then you are master to a villain, which, I think, is not much to your credit.

Thor. Had he been as much above thy arts, as my credit is superior to thy malice, I need not have blushed to own him.

Mill. My arts! I do not understand you, sir; if he has done amiss, what is that to me? Was he my servant, or yours? you should have taught him better.

Thor. Why should I wonder to find such uncommon impudence in one arrived to such a height of wickedness? When innocence is banished, modesty soon follows. Know, sorceress, I am not ignorant of any of the arts by which you first deceived the unwary youth. I know how, step by step, you have led him on, reluctant and unwilling, from crime to crime, to this last horrid act, which you contrived, and, by your cursed wiles, even forced him to commit.

Mill. Ha! Lucy has got the advantage, and accused me first. Unless I can turn the accusation, and fix it upon her and Blunt, I am lost,

[*Aside.*

Thor. Had I known your cruel design sooner, it had been prevented. To see you punished, as the law directs, is all that now remains. Poor satisfaction! for he, innocent as he is, compared to you, must suffer too. But heaven, who knows our frame, and graciously distinguishes between frailty and presumption, will make a difference, though man cannot, who sees not the heart, but only judges by the outward action.

Mill. I find, sir, we are both unhappy in our servants. I was surprised at such ill treatment, without cause, from a gentleman of your appearance, and therefore too hastily returned it; for which I ask your pardon. I now perceive you have been so far imposed on, as to think me engaged in a former correspondence with your servant, and, some way or other, accessary to his undoing.

Thor. I charge you as the cause, the sole cause, of all his guilt, and all his suffering; of all he now endures, and must endure, till a violent and shameful death shall put a dreadful period to his life and miseries together.

Mill. It is very strange. But who is secure from scandal and detraction? So far from contributing to his ruin, I never spoke to him till since this fatal accident, which I lament as much as you. It is true I have a servant, on whose account he hath of late frequented my house. If she has abused my good opinion of her, am I to blame? Has not Barnwell done the same by you?

Thor. I hear you; pray go on.

Mill. I have been informed he had a violent passion for her, and she for him: but till now I always thought it innocent. I know her poor, and given to expensive pleasures. Now, who can tell but she may have influenced the amorous youth to commit this murder to supply her extravagancies?——It must be so. I now recollect a thousand circumstances that confirm it. I will have

her, and a man servant, whom I suspect as an accomplice, secured immediately. I hope, sir, you will lay aside your ill-grounded suspicions of me, and join to punish the real contrivers of this bloody deed. [*Offers to go.*

Thor. Madam, you pass not this way: I see your design, but shall protect them from your malice.

Mill. I hope you will not use your influence, and the credit of your name, to screen such guilty wretches. Consider, sir, the wickedness of persuading a thoughtless youth to such a crime.

Thor. I do——and of betraying him when it was done.

Mill. That which you call betraying him may convince you of my innocence. She who loves him, though she contrived the murder, would never have delivered him into the hands of justice, as I, struck with horror at his crimes, have done.

Thor. How should an inexperienced youth escape her snares? The powerful magic of her wit and form might betray the wisest to simple dotage, and fire the blood that age had froze long since. Even I, that with just prejudice came prepared, had, by her artful story, been deceived, but that my strong conviction of her guilt makes even a doubt impossible.—[*Aside.*]—Those whom subtlely you would accuse, you know are your accusers; and, which proves unanswerably their innocence, and your guilt, they accused you before the deed was done, and did all that was in their power to prevent it.

Mill. Sir, you are very hard to be convinced; but I have a proof, which, when produced, will silence all objections. [*Exit* MILL.

Enter LUCY, TRUEMAN, BLUNT, *Officers, &c.*

Lucy. Gentlemen, pray place yourselves, some on one side of that door, and some on the other; watch her entrance, and act as your prudence shall direct you. This way, [*To* THOR.] and note her behaviour. I have observed her; she is driven to the last extremity, and is forming some desperate resolution. I guess at her design.

Re-enter MILLWOOD *with a Pistol;* TRUEMAN *secures her.*

True. Here thy power of doing mischief ends, deceitful, cruel, bloody woman!

Mill. Fool, hypocrite, villain,—man! thou canst not call me that.

True. To call thee woman were to wrong thy sex, thou devil!

Mill. That imaginary being is an emblem of thy cursed sex collected. A mirror, wherein each particular man may see his own likeness, and that of all mankind.

Thor. Think not, by aggravating the faults of others, to extenuate thy own, of which the abuse of such uncommon perfections of mind and body is not the least.

Mill. If such I had, well may I curse your barbarous sex, who robbed me of them ere I knew their worth; then left me, too late, to count their value by their loss. Another and another spoiler came, and all my gain was poverty and reproach. My soul disdained, and yet disdains, dependence and contempt. Riches, no matter by what means obtained, I saw secured the worst of men from both. I found it therefore necessary to be rich, and to that end I summoned all my arts. You call them wicked; be it so; they were such as my conversation with your sex had furnished me withal.

Thor. Sure none but the worst of men conversed with thee.

Mill. Men of all degrees, and all professions, I have known, yet found no difference, but in their several capacities; all were alike wicked, to the utmost of their power. In pride, contention, avarice, cruelty, and revenge, the reverend priesthood were my unerring guides. From suburb magistrates, who live by ruined reputations, as the inhospitable natives of Cornwall do by shipwrecks, I learned, that to charge my innocent neighbours with my crimes, was to merit their protection: for to screen the guilty is the less scandalous, when many are suspected; and detraction, like darkness and death, blackens all objects, and levels all distinction.—Such are your venal magistrates, who favour none but such as by their office they are sworn to punish. With them, not to be guilty, is the worst of crimes, and large fees, privately paid, are every needful virtue.

Thor. Your practice has sufficiently discovered your contempt of laws, both human and divine; no wonder, then, that you should hate the officers of both.

Mill. I know you, and I hate you all; I expect no mercy, and I ask for none; I followed my inclinations, and that the best of you do every day. All actions seem alike natural and indifferent to man and beast, who devour, or are devoured, as they meet with others weaker or stronger than themselves.

Thor. What pity it is a mind so comprehensive, daring, and inquisitive, should be a stranger to religion's sweet and powerful charms!

Mill. I am not fool enough to be an atheist, though I have known enough of men's hypocrisy to make a thousand simple women so. Whatever religion is in itself, as practised by mankind, it has caused the evils you say it was designed to cure. War, plague, and famine have not destroyed so many of the human race, as this pretended piety has done; and with such barbarous cruelty, as if the only way to honour Heaven were to turn the present world into hell.

Thor. Truth is truth, though from an enemy, and spoken in malice. You bloody, blind, and superstitious bigots, how will you answer this?

Mill. What are your laws, of which you make your boast, but the fool's wisdom, and the coward's valour, the instrument and screen of all your villanies? By them you punish in others what you act yourselves, or would have acted, had you been in their circumstances. The judge, who condemns the poor man for being a thief, had been a thief himself, had he been poor. Thus

you go on deceiving and being deceived, harassing, plaguing, and destroying one another. But women are your universal prey.

Women, by whom you are, the source of joy,
With cruel arts you labour to destroy:
A thousand ways our ruin you pursue,
Yet blame in us those arts first taught by you.

Oh, may from hence each violated maid,
By flattering, faithless, barbarous man betray'd,
When robb'd of innocence, and virgin fame,
From your destruction raise a nobler name,
To avenge their sex's wrongs devote their mind,
And future Millwoods prove to plague mankind!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in a Prison.*

Enter THOROWGOOD, BLUNT, *and* LUCY.

Thor. I have recommended to Barnwell a reverend divine, whose judgment and integrity I am well acquainted with. Nor has Millwood been neglected; but she, unhappy woman, still obstinate, refuses his assistance.

Lucy. This pious charity to the afflicted well becomes your character; yet pardon me, sir, if I wonder you were not at their trial.

Thor. I knew it was impossible to save him; and I and my family bear so great a part in his distress, that to have been present would but have aggravated our sorrows without relieving his.

Blunt. It was mournful indeed. Barnwell's youth and modest deportment, as he passed, drew tears from every eye. When placed at the bar, and arraigned before the reverend judges, with many tears and interrupting sobs, he confessed and aggravated his offences, without accusing, or once reflecting on Millwood, the shameless author of his ruin. But she, dauntless and unconcerned, stood by his side, viewing, with visible pride and contempt, the vast assembly, who all, with sympathising sorrow, wept for the wretched youth. Millwood, when called upon to answer, loudly insisted upon her innocence, and made an artful and a bold defence; but finding all in vain, the impartial jury and the learned bench concurring to find her guilty, how did she curse herself, poor Barnwell, us, her judges, all mankind! But what could that avail? She was condemned, and is this day to suffer with him.

Thor. The time draws on. I am going to visit Barnwell, as you are Millwood,

Lucy. We have not wronged her, yet I dread this interview. She is proud, impatient, wrathful, and unforgiving. To be the branded instruments of vengeance, to suffer in her shame, and sympathize with her in all she suffers, is the tribute we must pay for our former ill-spent lives, and long confederacy with her in wickedness.

Thor. Happy for you it ended when it did! What you have done against Millwood, I know proceeded from a just abhorrence of her crimes, free from interest, malice, or revenge. Proselytes to virtue should be encouraged; pursue your proposed reformation, and know me hereafter for your friend.

Lucy. This is a blessing as unhoped for as unmerited. But Heaven, that snatched us from impending ruin, sure intends you as its instrument to secure us from apostacy.

Thor. With gratitude to impute your deliverance to Heaven is just. Many, less virtuously disposed than Barnwell was, have never fallen in the manner he has done. May not such owe their safety rather to Providence than to themselves? With pity and compassion let us judge him. Great were his faults, but strong was the temptation. Let his ruin teach us diffidence, humility, and circumspection: for if we, who wonder at his fate, had, like him, been tried, like him, perhaps, we had fallen. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Dungeon, a Table, and a Lamp.*

BARNWELL *reading. Enter* THOROWGOOD *at a Distance.*

Thor. There see the bitter fruits of passion's detested reign, and sensual appetite indulged! severe reflections, penitence and tears.

Barn. My honoured, injured master, whose goodness has covered me a thousand times with shame, forgive this last unwilling disrespect. Indeed I saw you not.

Thor. It is well; I hope you are better employed in viewing of yourself; your journey is long, your time for preparation almost spent. I sent a reverend divine to teach you to improve it, and should be glad to hear of his success.

Barn. The word of truth, which he recommended for my constant companion in this my sad retirement, has at length removed the doubts I laboured under. From thence I have learned the infinite extent of heavenly mercy; that my offences, though great, are not unpardonable; and that it is not my interest only, but my duty, to believe and to rejoice in my hope. So shall Heaven receive the glory, and future penitents the profit, of my example.

Thor. Proceed.

Barn. It is wonderful that words should charm despair, speak peace and pardon to a murderer's conscience; but truth and mercy flow in every sentence, attended with force and energy divine. How shall I describe my present state of mind! I hope in doubt, and trembling I rejoice; I feel my grief increase, even as my fears give way. Joy and gratitude now supply more tears than the horror and anguish of despair before.

Thor. These are the genuine signs of true repentance; the only preparatory, the certain way to everlasting peace. Oh, the joy it gives to see a soul formed and prepared for Heaven! For this the faithful minister devotes himself to meditation, abstinence, and prayer, shunning the vain delights of sensual joys, and daily dies, that others may live for ever. For this he turns the sacred volume over, and spends his life in painful search of truth. The love of riches and the lust of power, he looks upon with just contempt and detestation; he only counts for wealth the souls he wins, and his highest ambition is to serve mankind. If the reward of all his pains be to preserve one soul from wandering, or turn one from the error of his ways, how does he then rejoice, and own his little labours overpaid!

Barn. What do I owe for all your generous kindness? But though I cannot, Heaven can and will reward you.

Thor. To see thee thus, is joy too great for words. Farewell.—Heaven strengthen thee!—Farewell.

Barn. Oh, sir, there is something I would say, if my sad swelling heart would give me leave.

Thor. Give it vent a while, and try.

Barn. I had a friend—it is true I am unworthy—yet methinks your generous example might persuade——Could not I see him once, before I go from whence there is no return?

Thor. He is coming, and as much thy friend as ever. I will not anticipate his sorrow; too soon he will see the sad effect of this contagious ruin. This torrent of domestic misery bears too hard upon me. I must retire to indulge a weakness I find impossible to overcome. [*Aside.*] Much loved—and much lamented youth!—Farewell.—Heaven strengthen thee!———Eternally farewell!

Barn. The best of masters and of men—Farewell! While I live, let me not want your prayers.

Thor. Thou shalt not. Thy peace being made with Heaven, death is already vanquished. Bear a little longer the pains that attend this transitory life, and cease from pain for ever.

[*Exit* Thorowgood.

Barn. Perhaps I shall. I find a power within, that bears my soul above the fears of death, and, spite of conscious shame and guilt, gives me a taste of pleasure more than mortal.

Enter Trueman *and Keeper.*

Keep. Sir, there is the prisoner. [*Exit Keeper.*

Barn. Trueman! My friend, whom I so wished to see, yet now he's here, I dare not look upon him! [*Weeps.*

True. Oh, Barnwell! Barnwell!

Barn. Mercy! Mercy! gracious Heaven! For death, but not for this, I was prepared.

True. What have I suffered since I saw thee last! What pain has absence given me!—But, oh, to see thee thus!——

Barn. I know it is dreadful! I feel the anguish of thy generous soul—But I was born to murder all who love me! [*Both weep.*

True. I came not to reproach you; I thought to bring you comfort; but I am deceived, for I have none to give. I came to share thy sorrow, but cannot bear my own.

Barn. My sense of guilt, indeed, you cannot know; it is what the good and innocent, like you, can never conceive: but other griefs, at present, I have none, but what I feel for you. In your sorrow I read you love me still; but, yet, methinks, it is strange when I consider what I am.

True. No more of that; I can remember nothing but thy virtues, thy honest, tender friendship, our former happy state, and present misery. Oh, had you trusted me when first the fair seducer tempted you, all might have been prevented!

Barn. Alas, thou knowest not what a wretch I have been. Breach of friendship was my first and least offence. So far was I lost to goodness, so devoted to the author of my ruin, that, had she insisted on my murdering thee,—I think—I should have done it.

True. Prithee, aggravate thy faults no more.

Barn. I think I should! Thus good and generous as you are, I should have murdered you!

True. We have not yet embraced, and may be interrupted. Come to my arms.

Barn. Never, never will I taste such joys on earth; never will I so soothe my just remorse. Are those honest arms and faithful bosom fit to embrace and to support a murderer? These iron fetters only shall clasp, and flinty pavement bear me; [*throwing himself on the ground,*] even these too good for such a bloody monster.

True. Shall fortune sever those whom friendship joined? Thy miseries cannot lay thee so low, but love will find thee. Here will we offer to stern calamity; this place the altar, and ourselves the sacrifice. Our mutual groans shall echo to each other through the dreary vault; our sighs shall number the moments as they pass, and mingling tears communicate such anguish, as words were never made to express.

Barn. Then be it so. [*Rising.*] Since you propose an intercourse of woe, pour all your griefs into my breast, and in exchange take mine. [*Embracing.*] Where's now the anguish that we promised? You have taken mine, and make me no return. Sure peace and comfort dwell within these arms, and sorrow cannot approach me while I am here. This too is the work of Heaven; which, having before spoke peace and pardon to me, now sends thee to confirm it. Oh, take some of the joy that overflows my breast!

True. I do, I do. Almighty power! how hast thou made us capable to bear at once the extremes of pleasure and of pain.

Enter Keeper.

Keep. Sir.

True. I come. [*Exit Keeper.*

Barn. Must you leave me? Death would soon have parted us for ever.

True. Oh, my Barnwell! there's yet another

task behind. Again your heart must bleed for others woes.

Barn. To meet and part with you I thought was all I had to do on earth. What is there more for me to do or suffer?

True. I dread to tell thee, yet it must be known! Maria——

Barn. Our master's fair and virtuous daughter?—

True. The same.

Barn. No misfortune, I hope, has reached that maid! Preserve her, Heaven, from every ill, to shew mankind that goodness is your care!

True. Thy, thy misfortunes, my unhappy friend, have reached her. Whatever you and I have felt, and more, if more be possible, she feels for you.

Barn. I know he doth abhor a lie, and would not trifle with his dying friend. This is indeed the bitterness of death. [*Aside.*

True. You must remember (for we all observed it,) for some time past, a heavy melancholy weighed her down. Disconsolate she seemed, and pined and languished from a cause unknown; till, hearing of your dreadful fate, the long-stifled flame blazed out; she wept, and wrung her hands, and tore her hair, and, in the transport of her grief, discovered her own lost state, while she lamented yours.

Barn. Will all the pain I feel restore thy ease, lovely unhappy maid! [*Weeping.*] Why did you not let me die, and never know it?

True. It was impossible. She makes no secret of her passion for you; she is determined to see you ere you die, and waits for me to introduce her. [*Exit* TRUEMAN.

Barn. Vain, busy thoughts, be still! What avails it to think on what I might have been! I now am——what I have made myself.

Enter TRUEMAN *and* MARIA.

True. Madam, reluctant I lead you to this dismal scene. This is the seat of misery and guilt. Here awful justice reserves her public victims. This is the entrance to a shameful death.

Mar. To this sad place then, no improper guest, the abandoned lost Maria brings despair, and sees the subject and the cause of all this world of woe. Silent and motionless he stands, as if his soul had quitted her abode, and the lifeless form alone was left behind; yet that so perfect, that beauty and death, ever at enmity, now seem united there.

Barn. I groan, but murmur not. Just Heaven! I am your own; do with me what you please.

Mar. Why are your streaming eyes still fixed below, as though thou wouldst give the greedy earth thy sorrows, and rob me of my due! Were happiness within your power, you should bestow it where you pleased; but in your misery I must and will partake.

Barn. Oh, say not so, but fly, abhor, and leave me to my fate! Consider what you are, how vast your fortune, and how bright your fame. Have pity on your youth, your beauty, and unequalled virtue; for which so many noble peers have sighed in vain. Bless with your charms some honourable lord. Adorn with your beauty, and by your example improve, the English court, that justly claims such merit: so shall I quickly be to you, as though I had never been.

Mar. When I forget you, I must be so indeed. Reason, choice, virtue, all forbid it. Let women, like Millwood, if there are more such women, smile in prosperity, and in adversity forsake. Be it the pride of virtue to repair, or to partake, the ruin such have made.

True. Lovely, ill-fated maid! Was there ever such generous distress before? How must this pierce his grateful heart, and aggravate his woes!

Barn. Ere I knew guilt or shame, when fortune smiled, and when my youthful hopes were at the highest; if then to have raised my thoughts to you, had been presumption in me never to have been pardoned, think how much beneath yourself you condescend to regard me now!

Mar. Let her blush, who, proffering love, invades the freedom of your sex's choice, and meanly sues in hopes of a return. Your inevitable fate hath rendered hope impossible as vain. Then why should I fear to avow a passion so just and so disinterested?

True. If any should take occasion from Millwood's crimes to libel the best and fairest part of the creation, here let them see their error.—The most distant hopes of such a tender passion from so bright a maid, might add to the happiness of the most happy, and make the greatest proud: yet here 'tis lavished in vain. Though by the rich present the generous donor is undone, he on whom it is bestowed receives no benefit.

Barn. So the aromatic spices of the east, which all the living covet and esteem, are with unavailing kindness wasted on the dead.

Mar. Yes, fruitless is my love, and unavailing all my sighs and tears. Can they save thee from approaching death? From such a death? Oh sorrow insupportable! Oh, terrible idea! What is her misery and distress, who sees the first, last object of her love, for whom alone she would live, for whom she would die a thousand thousand deaths, if it were possible, expiring in her arms? Yet she is happy when compared to me. Were millions of worlds mine, I would gladly give them in exchange for her condition. The most consummate woe is light to mine. The last of curses to other miserable maids, is all I ask for my relief, and that's denied me.

True. Time and reflection cure all ills.

Mar. All but this. His dreadful catastrophe, Virtue herself abhors. To give a holiday to suburb slaves, and passing entertain the savage herd, who, elbowing each other for a sight, pursue and press upon him like his fate! A mind, with piety and resolution armed, may smile on death: But public ignominy, everlasting shame, shame, the death of souls! to die a thousand times, and yet survive even death itself in never-dying infamy—Is this to be endured! Can I, who live in him, and must each hour of my devoted life feel all these woes renewed,—Can I endure this?

True. Grief has so impaired her spirits, she pants as in the agonies of death.

Barn. Preserve her, Heaven, and restore her peace, nor let her death be added to my crimes! [*Bell tolls.*] I am summoned to my fate.

Enter Keeper.

Keep. Sir, the officers attend you. Millwood is already summoned.

Barn. Tell them, I am ready. And now, my friend, farewell. [*Embracing.*] Support, and comfort, the best you can, this mourning fair.—No more—Forget not to pray for me. [*Turning to* MARIA.] Would you, bright excellence, permit me the honour of a chaste embrace, the last happiness this world could give were mine. [*She inclines towards him, they embrace.*] Exalted goodness! Oh, turn your eyes from earth and me to Heaven, where virtue, like yours, is ever heard! Pray for the peace of my departing soul. Early my race of wickedness began, and soon I reached the summit. Ere nature has finished her work, and stamped me man, just at the time when others begin to stray, my course is finished. Though short my span of life, and few my days, yet count my crimes for years, and I have lived whole ages. Thus justice, in compassion to mankind, cuts off a wretch like me; by one such example to secure thousands from future ruin.—Justice and mercy are in Heaven the same: its utmost severity is mercy to the whole: thereby to cure man's folly and presumption, which else would render even infinite mercy vain and ineffectual.

If any youth, like you, in future times,
Shall mourn my fate, though he abhors my crimes,
Or tender maid, like you, my tale shall hear,
And to my sorrows give a pitying tear;
To each such melting eye and throbbing heart,
Would gracious Heaven this benefit impart,
Never to know my guilt, nor feel my pain,
Then must you own, you ought not to complain,
Since you nor weep, nor shall I die in vain.

[*Exeunt* BARNWELL *and Officers.*

SCENE III.—*The Place of Execution.*

The Gallows and Ladder at the farther End of the Stage. A Crowd of Spectators, BLUNT *and* LUCY.

Lucy. Heavens! what a throng!

Blunt. How terrible is death, when thus prepared!

Lucy. Support them, Heaven! Thou only canst support them; all other help is vain.

Officer. [*Within.*] Make way there; make way, and give the prisoners room.

Lucy. They are here: observe them well.—How humble and composed young Barnwell seems! But Millwood looks wild, and ruffled with passion, confounded, and amazed.

Enter BARNWELL, MILLWOOD, *Officers and Executioner.*

Barn. See, Millwood, see, our journey is at an end! Life, like a tale that's told, is passed away. That short, but dark and unknown passage, death, is all the space between us and endless joys, or woes eternal.

Mill. Is this the end of all my flattering hopes? Were youth and beauty given me for a curse, and wisdom, only to ensure my ruin? They were, they were. Heaven, thou hast done thy worst. Or if thou hast in store some untried plague, somewhat that is worse than shame, despair, and death, unpitied death, confirmed despair, and soul-confounding shame; something that men and angels cannot describe, and only fiends, who bear it, can conceive; now, pour it now on this devoted head, that I may feel the worst thou canst inflict, and bid defiance to thy utmost power.

Barn. Yet ere we pass the dreadful gulf of death, yet ere you are plunged in everlasting woe, Oh, bend your stubborn knees, and harder heart, humbly to deprecate the wrath divine! Who knows, but Heaven, in your dying moments, may bestow that grace and mercy which your life despised!

Mill. Why name you mercy to a wretch like me? Mercy is beyond my hope, almost beyond my wish. I cannot repent, nor ask to be forgiven.

Barn. Oh, think what 'tis to be for ever, ever miserable, nor with vain pride oppose a power, that is able to destroy you!

Mill. That will destroy me; I feel it will. A deluge of wrath is pouring on my soul. Chains, darkness, wheels, racks, sharp-stinged scorpions, molten lead, and whole seas of sulphur, are light to what I feel.

Barn. Oh, add not to your vast account despair! a sin more injurious to Heaven, than all you have yet committed.

Mill. Oh, I have sinned beyond the reach of mercy!

Barn. Oh, say not so! it is blasphemy to think it. As yon bright roof is higher than the earth, so, and much more, does Heaven's goodness pass our apprehension. Oh, what created being shall presume to circumscribe mercy, that knows no bounds!

Mill. This yields no hope. Though pity may be boundless, yet it is free. I was doomed, before the world began, to endless pains, and thou to joys eternal.

Barn. Oh, gracious heaven! extend thy pity to her; let thy rich mercy flow in plenteous streams, to chase her fears, and heal her wounded soul!

Mill. It will not be: your prayers are lost in air, or else returned, perhaps, with double blessings, to your bosom: they help not me.

Barn. Yet hear me, Millwood!

Mill. Away, I will not hear thee: I tell thee, youth, I am by Heaven devoted a dreadful instance of its power to punish. [BARNWELL *seems to pray.*] If thou wilt pray, pray for thyself, not me. How doth his fervent soul mount with his words, and both ascend to Heaven! that Heaven, whose gates are shut with adamantine bars

against my prayers, had I the will to pray. I cannot bear it. Sure 'tis the worst of torments to behold others enjoy that bliss, which we must never taste.

Officer. The utmost limit of your time is expired.

Mill. Encompassed with horror, whither must I go? I would not live—nor die——That I could cease to be——or ne'er had been!

Barn. Since peace and comfort are denied her here, may she find mercy where she least expects it, and this be all her hell! From our example may all be taught to fly the first approach of vice: but if o'ertaken,

By strong temptation, weakness, or surprise,
Lament their guilt, and by repentance rise.
The impenitent alone die unforgiven:
To sin's like men, and to forgive like Heaven.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter TRUEMAN.

Lucy. Heart-breaking sight!——Oh, wretched, wretched Millwood!

True. How is she disposed to meet her fate?

Blunt. Who can describe unutterable woe?

Lucy. She goes to death encompassed with horror, loathing life, and yet afraid to die. No tongue can tell her anguish and despair.

True. Heaven be better to her than her fears! May she prove a warning to others, a monument of mercy in herself!

Lucy. Oh, sorrow insupportable! Break, break, my heart!

True. In vain,

With bleeding hearts, and weeping eyes, we show
A humane, generous sense of others' woe;
Unless we mark what drew to ruin on,
And, by avoiding that, prevent our own.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

BY COLLEY CIBBER.—SPOKEN BY MARIA.

SINCE fate has robb'd me of the hapless youth,
For whom my heart had hoarded up its truth;
By all the laws of love and honour, now,
I'm free again to chuse——and one of you.
But soft——With caution first I'll round me peep:
Maids, in my case, should look before they leap.
Here's choice enough, of various sorts and hue,
The cit, the wit, the rake cock'd up in cue,
The fair spruce mercer, and the tawny Jew.
Suppose I search the sober gallery?—No;
There's none but 'prentices, and cuckolds all-a-row;
And these, I doubt, are those that make them so.

[*Pointing to the boxes.*

'Tis very well, enjoy the jest:—but you,
Fine powder'd sparks,—nay, I am told 'tis true,—
Your happy spouses—can make cuckolds too.
'Twixt you and them the difference this perhaps;
The cit's ashamed whene'er his duck he traps;
But you, when madam's tripping, let her fall,
Cock up your hats, and take no shame at all.
What if some favour'd poet I could meet,
Whose love would lay his laurels at my feet?
No—painted passions real love abhors——
His flame would prove the suit of creditors.
Not to detain you then with longer pause,
In short, my heart to his conclusion draws;
I yield it to the hand that's loudest in applause.

FATAL CURIOSITY.

BY

LILLO.

PROLOGUE.

BY HENRY FIELDING.

THE Tragic Music has long forgot to please,
With Shakespeare's nature and with Fletcher's ease:
No passion mov'd, through five long acts you sit,
Charm'd with the poet's language or his wit.
Fine things are said, no matter whence they fall;
Each single character might speak them all.
But from this modern fashionable way,
To-night our author begs your leave to stray.
No fustian hero rages here to-night;
No armies fall to fix a tyrant's right:
From lower life we draw our scene's distress:
—Let not your equals move your pity less!
Virtue distrest in humble state support;
Nor think she never lives without the court.
Though to our scenes no royal robes belong,
And though our little stage as yet be young,
Throw both your scorn and prejudice aside,
Let us with favour, not contempt, be tried;
Through the first acts a kind attention lend,
The growing scene shall force you to attend;
Shall catch the eyes of every tender fair,
And make them charm their lovers with a tear.
The lover too by pity shall impart
His tender passion to his fair one's heart:
The breast which others' anguish cannot move,
Was ne'er the seat of friendship, or of love.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Old WILMOT.
Young WILMOT, *his son.*
EUSTACE, *Young Wilmot's friend.*
RANDAL, *the faithful attendant of Old Wilmot.*

WOMEN.

AGNES, *wife to Old Wilmot.*
CHARLOTTE, *beloved of Young Wilmot.*
MARIA, *her friend.*

SCENE,—*Penryn, in Cornwall.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—WILMOT'S *House.*

Old WILMOT *alone.*

The day is far advanced. The chearful sun
Pursues with vigour his repeated course:
No labour lessens, nor no time decays
His strength, or splendour: evermore the same,
From age to age his influence sustains
Dependent worlds, bestows both life and motion
On the dull mass, that forms their dusky orbs,
Chears them with heat, and gilds them with his brightness.
Yet man, of jarring elements composed,
Who posts from change to change, from the first hour
Of his frail being to his dissolution,
Enjoys the sad prerogative above him,
To think and to be wretched!—What is life
To him, that's born to die!
Or, what the wisdom, whose perfection ends
In knowing, we know nothing!
Mere contradiction all! A tragic farce,
Tedious, though short, elaborate without art,
Ridiculously sad——

Enter RANDAL.

Where hast been, Randal?

Rand. Not out of Penryn, sir; but to the strand,
To hear what news from Falmouth, since the storm
Of wind last night.

O. Wilm. It was a dreadful one.

Rand. Some found it so. A noble ship from India,
Entering the harbour, run upon a rock,
And there was lost.

O. Wilm. What became of those on board her?

Rand. Some few are sav'd, but much the greater part,
'Tis thought, are perish'd.

O. Wilm. They are past the fear
Of future tempests, or a wreck on shore:
These, who escaped, are still expos'd to both.

Rand. But I've heard news, much stranger than this shipwreck
Here in Cornwall. The brave Sir Walter Raleigh,
Being arriv'd at Plymouth from Guiana,
A most unhappy voyage, has been betray'd
By base Sir Lewis Stukely, his own kinsman,
And seiz'd on by an order from the court;
And 'tis reported he must lose his head,
To satisfy the Spaniards.

O. Wilm. Not unlikely;
His martial genius does not suit the times.
There's now no insolence that Spain can offer,
But, to the shame of this pacific reign,
Poor England must submit to.—Gallant man!
Posterity perhaps may do thee justice,
And praise thy courage, learning, and integrity,
When thou art past hearing: thy successful enemies,
Much sooner paid, have their reward in hand,
And know for what they labour'd.—Such events
Must, questionless, excite all thinking men,
To love and practise virtue!

Rand. Nay, 'tis certain,
That virtue ne'er appears so like itself,
So truly bright and great, as when opprest.

O. Wilm. I understand no riddles.
Where is your mistress?

Rand. I saw her pass the High-street, towards the Minster.

O. Wilm. She is gone to visit Charlotte. She doth well.
In the soft bosom of that gentle maid
There dwells more goodness than the rigid race
Of moral pedants e'er believed, or taught.
With what amazing constancy and truth,
Doth she sustain the absence of our son,
Whom more than life she loves? How shun for him,
Whom we shall ne'er see more, the rich and great,
Who own her charms, and sigh to make her happy!
Since our misfortunes we have found no friend,
None who regarded our distress, but her;
And she, by what I have observed of late,
Is wearied, or exhausted. Curst condition!—
To live a burden to one only friend,
And blast her youth with our contagious woe!—
Who, that had reason, soul, or sense, would bear it
A moment longer? Then this honest wretch!—
I must dismiss him—Why should I detain
A grateful, generous youth to perish with me?
His service may procure him bread elsewhere,
Though I have none to give him.—Prithee, Randal,
How long hast thou been with me?

Rand. Fifteen years.

I was a very child, when first you took me,
To wait upon your son, my dear young master.
I oft have wish'd I'd gone to India with him,
Though you, desponding, give him o'er for lost.—
[*Old* WILMOT *wipes his eyes.*
I am to blame: this talk revives your sorrow
For his long absence.

O. Wilm. That cannot be revived,
Which never died.

Rand. The whole of my intent
Was to confess your bounty, that supplied
The loss of both my parents: I was long
The object of your charitable care.

O. Wilm. No more of that: Thou hast serv'd me longer since
Without reward; so that account is balanced,

Or rather I'm thy debtor. I remember,
When poverty began to show her face
Within these walls, and all my other servants,
Like pamper'd vermin from a falling house,
Retreated with the plunder they had gain'd,
And left me, too indulgent and remiss
For such ungrateful wretches, to be crush'd
Beneath the ruin they had help'd to make,
That you, more good than wise, refus'd to leave me.

Rand. Nay, I beseech you, sir!—

O. Wilm. With my distress,
In perfect contradiction to the world,
Thy love, respect, and diligence, increas'd.
Now, all the recompence within my power,
Is to discharge thee, Randal, from my hard,
Unprofitable service.

Rand. Heaven forbid!
Shall I forsake you in your worst necessity?—
Believe me, sir, my honest soul abhors
The barbarous thought.

O. Wilm. What! canst thou feed on air?
I have not left wherewith to purchase food
For one meal more.

Rand. Rather than leave you thus,
I'll beg my bread, and live on others' bounty,
While I serve you.

O. Wilm. Down, down my swelling heart,
Or burst in silence! 'Tis thy cruel fate
Insults thee by his kindness—He is innocent
Of all the pain it gives thee.—Go thy ways;
I will no more suppress thy youthful hopes
Of rising in the world.

Rand. 'Tis true, I'm young,
And never tried my fortune, or my genius,
Which may perhaps find out some happy means,
As yet unthought of, to supply your wants.

O. Wilm. Thou tortur'st me: I hate all obligations
Which I can ne'er return—And who art thou,
That I should stoop to take them from thy hand?
Care for thyself, but take no thought for me;
I will not want thee—trouble me no more.

Rand. Be not offended, sir, and I will go.
I ne'er repin'd at your commands before;
But, Heaven's my witness, I obey you now
With strong reluctance, and a heavy heart!
Farewell, my worthy master! [*Going.*

O. Wilm. Farewell!—Stay!
As thou art yet a stranger to the world,
Of which, alas! I've had too much experience,
I should, methinks, before we part, bestow
A little counsel on thee.—Dry thy eyes:
If thou weep'st thus, I shall proceed no farther.
Dost thou aspire to greatness, or to wealth?
Quit books, and the unprofitable search
Of wisdom there, and study human kind:
No science will avail thee without that;
But that obtain'd, thou need'st not any other.
This will instruct thee to conceal thy views,
And wear the face of probity and honour,
Till thou hast gain'd thy end: which must be ever
Thy own advantage, at that man's expence,
Who shall be weak enough to think thee honest.

Rand. You mock me, sure!

O. Wilm. I never was more serious.

Rand. Why should you counsel what you scorn'd to practise?

O. Wilm. Because that foolish scorn has been my ruin.
I've been an idiot, but would have thee wiser,
And treat mankind, as they would treat thee, Randal,
As they deserve, and I've been treated by them:
Thou'st seen by me, and those who now despise me,
How men of fortune fall, and beggars rise.
Shun my example; treasure up my precepts;
The world's before thee: be a knave, and prosper!
What, art thou dumb? [*After a long pause.*

Rand. Amazement ties my tongue!
Where are your former principles?

O. Wilm. No matter:
Suppose I have renounced them: I have passions,
And love thee still; therefore would have thee think,
The world is all a scene of deep deceit,
And he, who deals with mankind on the square,
Is his own bubble, and undoes himself.
Farewell, and mark my counsel, boy. [*Exit.*

Rand. Amazement!
Is this the man I thought so wise and just?
What! teach and counsel me to be a villain!
Sure grief has made him frantic, or some fiend
Assum'd his shape! I shall suspect my senses.
High-minded he was ever, and improvident;
But pitiful and generous to a fault.
Pleasure he lov'd, but honour was his idol.
O fatal change! O horrid transformation!
So a majestic temple, sunk to ruin,
Becomes the loathsome shelter and abode
Of lurking serpents, toads, and beasts of prey;
And scaly dragons hiss, and lions roar,
Where wisdom taught, and music charm'd, before. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—CHARLOTTE'S *House.*

Enter CHARLOTTE *and* MARIA.

Char. What terror and amazement must they feel,
Who die by shipwreck!

Mar. 'Tis a dreadful thought!

Char. Aye! is it not, Maria?—To descend,
Living and conscious, to the watery tomb!—
Alas! had we no sorrows of our own,
The frequent instances of others' woe
Must give a generous mind a world of pain.
But you forget you promis'd me to sing.
Though cheerfulness and I have long been strangers,
Harmonious sounds are still delightful to me.
There's sure no passion in the human soul,
But finds its food in music. I would hear
The song, composed by that unhappy maid,
Whose faithful lover 'scap'd a thousand perils,
From rocks, and sands, and the devouring deep;
And, after all, being arrived at home,

Passing a narrow brook, was drowned there,
And perished in her sight.

SONG.

Mar. *Cease, cease, heart-easing tears!*
Adieu, you flattering fears,
Which seven long tedious years
Taught me to bear.
Tears are for lighter woes;
Fear no such danger knows,
As fate remorseless shews,
Endless despair!
Dear cause of all my pain,
On the wide stormy main,
Thou wast preserved in vain,
Though still adored.
Hadst thou died there unseen,
My wounded eyes had been
Sav'd from the direst scene
Maid e'er deplored.

[CHARLOTTE *finds a letter.*

Char. What's this?—A letter superscribed to me!
None could convey it here but you, Maria.
Ungenerous, cruel maid! to use me thus!
To join with flattering men to break my peace,
And persecute me to the last retreat!

Mar. Why should it break your peace, to hear the sighs
Of honourable love? This letter is——

Char. No matter whence: return it back unopened:
I have no love, no charms, but for my Wilmot,
Nor would have any.

Mar. Alas! Wilmot's dead;
Or, living, dead to you.

Char. I'll not despair: Patience shall cherish hope;
Nor wrong his honour by unjust suspicion.
I know his truth, and will preserve my own.
But, to prevent all future vain, officious importunity,
Know, thou incessant foe to my repose,
Whether he sleeps secure from mortal cares,
In the deep bosom of the boisterous main,
Or, tost with tempest, still endures its rage;
No second choice shall violate my vows.
High Heaven, which heard them, and abhors the perjur'd,
Can witness, they were made without reserve;
Never to be retracted, ne'er dissolv'd
By accident or absence, time or death.

Mar. And did your vows oblige you to support
His haughty parents, to your utter ruin?——
Well may you weep to think on what you've done!

Char. I weep to think, that I can do no more
For their support. What will become of them!
The hoary, helpless, miserable pair!

Mar. What I can't praise, you force me to admire,
And mourn for you, as you lament for them.
Your patience, constancy, and resignation,
Merit a better fate.

Char. So pride would tell me,
And vain self-love; but I believe them not:
And if, by wanting pleasure, I have gain'd
Humility, I'm richer for my loss.

Mar. You have the heavenly art still to improve
Your mind by all events.—But here comes one,
Whose pride seems to increase with her misfortunes.
Her faded dress, unfashionably fine,
As ill conceals her poverty, as that
Strain'd complaisance her haughty, swelling heart.
Though perishing with want, so far from asking,
She ne'er receives a favour uncompelled,
And, while she ruins, scorns to be obliged:
Let me depart; I know she loves me not.
[*Exit* MARIA.

Enter AGNES.

Char. This visit's kind.

Agn. Few else would think it so:
Those who would once have thought themselves much honour'd
By the least favour, though 'twere but a look,
I could have shewn them, now refuse to see me.
'Tis misery enough to be reduced
To the low level of the common herd,
Who, born to beggary, envy all above them;
But 'tis the curse of curses, to endure
The insolent contempt of those we scorn.

Char. By scorning, we provoke them to contempt,
And thus offend, and suffer in our turns.
We must have patience.

Agn. No, I scorn them yet!
But there's no end of suffering: Who can say,
Their sorrows are complete? My wretched husband,
Tired with our woes, and hopeless of relief,
Grows sick of life,
And, urged by indignation and despair,
Would plunge into eternity at once,
By foul self-murder!

Char. Gracious Heaven support him!

Agn. His fixed love for me,
Whom he would fain persuade to share his fate,
And take the same, uncertain, dreadful course,
Alone withholds his hand.

Char. And may it ever!

Agn. I've known with him the two extremes of life,
The highest happiness, and deepest woe,
With all the sharp and bitter aggravations
Of such a vast transition—Such a fall
In the decline of life!—I have as quick,
As exquisite, a sense of pain as he,
And would do any thing, but die, to end it;
But there my courage fails. Death is the worst
That fate can bring, and cuts off every hope.

Char. We must not chuse, but strive to bear our lot
Without reproach, or guilt. By one rash act
Of desperation, we may overthrow

The merit we've been raising all our days,
And lose our whole reward. And now, methinks,
Now, more than ever, we have cause to fear,
And be upon our guard. The hand of Heaven
Spreads clouds on clouds o'er our benighted heads,
And, wrapt in darkness, doubles our distresses.
I had, the night last past, repeated twice,
A strange and awful dream. I would not yield
To fearful superstition, nor despise
The admonition of a friendly power,
That wished my good.

Agn. I have certain plagues enough,
Without the help of dreams, to make me wretched.

Char. I would not stake my happiness or duty
On their uncertain credit, nor on aught
But reason, and the known decrees of Heaven;
Yet dreams have sometimes shewn events to come,
And may excite to vigilance and care.
My vision may be such, and sent to warn us
(Now we are tried by multiplied afflictions,)
To mark each motion of our swelling hearts,
Lest we attempt to extricate ourselves,
And seek deliverance by forbidden ways——
To keep our hopes and innocence entire,
Till we're dismissed to join the happy dead,
Or Heaven relieves us here.

Agn. Well, to your dream.

Char. Methought I sat, in a dark winter's night,
On the wide summit of a barren mountain;
The sharp bleak winds pierced through my shivering frame,
And storms of hail, and sleet, and driving rains,
Beat, with impetuous fury, on my head,
Drenched my chilled limbs, and poured a deluge round me.
On one hand, ever-gentle Patience sat,
On whose calm bosom I reclin'd my head;
And, on the other, silent Contemplation.
At length, to my unclos'd and watchful eyes,
That long had rolled in darkness, dawn appear'd;
And I beheld a man, an utter stranger,
But of a graceful and exalted mien,
Who press'd, with eager transport, to embrace me.
I shunn'd his arms. But at some words he spoke,
Which I have now forgot, I turn'd again;
But he was gone. And, oh! transporting sight!
Your son, my dearest Wilmot! filled his place.

Agn. If I regarded dreams, I should expect
Some fair event from yours.

Char. But what's to come,
Though more obscure, is terrible indeed.
Methought we parted soon, and when I sought him,
You, and his father—Yes, you both were there—
Strove to conceal him from me. I pursued you
Both with my cries, and call'd on Heaven and earth
To judge my wrongs, and force you to reveal
Where you had hid my love, my life, my Wilmot!

Agn. Unless you mean to offend me, spare the rest.
'Tis just as likely Wilmot should return,
As we become your foes.

Char. Far be such thought
From Charlotte's breast! But when I heard you name
Self-murder, it revived the frightful image
Of such a dreadful scene!—

Agn. You will persist!—

Char. Excuse me: I have done. Being a dream,
I thought, at least, it could not give offence.

Agn. You could not think so, had you thought at all.
But I take nothing ill from thee. Adieu!
I have tarried longer than I first intended,
And my poor husband mourns the while alone.
[*Exit* AGNES.

Char. She's gone abruptly, and, I fear, displeased.
The least appearance of advice or caution,
Sets her impatient temper in a flame.
When grief, that well might humble, swells our pride,
And pride, encreasing, aggravates our grief,
The tempest must prevail, till we are lost.
When Heaven incens'd proclaims unequal war
With guilty earth, and sends its shafts from far,
No bolt descends to strike, no flame to burn,
The humble shrubs that in low vallies mourn;
While mountain pines, whose lofty heads aspire
To fan the storm and wave in fields of fire,
And stubborn oaks that yield not to its force,
Are burnt, o'erthrown, or shiver'd in its course.
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Town and Port of Penryn.*

Enter Young WILMOT *and* EUSTACE *in Indian Habits.*

Y. Wilm. Welcome, my friend, to Penryn! Here we're safe.

Eust. Then we're delivered twice: first from the sea,
And then from men, who, more remorseless, prey
On shipwreck'd wretches, and who spoil and murder
Those, whom fell tempests and devouring waves,
In all their fury, spared.

Y. Wilm. It is a scandal,
(Though malice must acquit the better sort)
The rude unpolish'd people here in Cornwall
Have long lain under, and with too much justice:
For 'tis an evil grown almost inveterate,
And asks a bold and skilful hand to cure.

Eust. Your treasure's safe, I hope?

Y. Wilm. 'Tis here, thank heaven!
Being in jewels, when I saw our danger,
I hid it in my bosom.

Eust. I observed you,
And wonder how you could command your thoughts,
In such a time of terror and confusion.

Y. Wilm. My thoughts were then at home.—O England! England!
Thou seat of plenty, liberty, and health!
With transport I behold thy verdant fields,

Thy lofty mountains rich with useful ore,
Thy numerous herds, thy flocks, and winding streams!
After a long and tedious absence, Eustace,
With what delight we breathe our native air,
And tread the genial soil that bore us first!
'Tis said, the world is every wise man's country;
Yet, after having viewed its various nations,
I am weak enough still to prefer my own
To all I've seen beside—You smile, my friend!
And think, perhaps, 'tis instinct more than reason.
Why be it so: Instinct preceded reason,
Even in the wisest men, and may sometimes
Be much the better guide. But be it either,
I must confess, that even death itself
Appeared to me with twice its native horrors,
When apprehended in a foreign land.
Death is, no doubt, in every place the same;
Yet nature casts a look towards home, and most,
Who have it in their power, chuse to expire
Where they first drew their breath.

Eust. Believe me, Wilmot,
Your grave reflections were not what I smiled at;
I own the truth. That we're returned to England
Affords me all the pleasure you can feel.
Yet I must think a warmer passion moves you:
Thinking of that I smiled.

Y. Wilm. O Eustace! Eustace!
Thou know'st, for I have confest to thee, I love;
But having never seen the charming maid,
Thou canst not know the fierceness of my flame.
My hopes and fears, like the tempestuous seas
That we have past, now mount me to the skies,
Now hurl me down from that stupendous height,
And drive me to the centre. Did you know
How much depends on this important hour,
You would not be surprised to see me thus.
The sinking fortune of our ancient house
Compelled me young to leave my native country,
My weeping parents, and my lovely Charlotte,
Who ruled, and must for ever rule, my fate.
—O! should my Charlotte, doubtful of my truth,
Or in despair ever to see me more,
Have given herself to some more happy lover!—
Distraction's in the thought! Or should my parents,
Grieved for my absence, and opprest with want,
Have sunk beneath their burden and expired,
While I too late was flying to relieve them;
The end of all my long and weary travels,
The hope that made success itself a blessing,
Being defeated and for ever lost—
What were the riches of the world to me?

Eust. The wretch, who fears all that is possible,
Must suffer more than he, who feels the worst
A man can feel, yet lives exempt from fear.
A woman may be false, and friends are mortal;
And yet your aged parents may be living,
And your fair mistress constant.

Y. Wilm. True, they may;
I doubt, but I despair not. No, my friend!
My hopes are strong and lively as my fears;
They tell me, Charlotte is as true as fair;
That we shall meet never to part again;
That I shall see my parents, kiss the tears
From their pale hollow cheeks, cheer their sad hearts,
And drive that gaping phantom, meagre want,
For ever from their board; their days to come
Crown all with peace, with pleasure and abundance;
Receive their fond embraces and their blessings,
And be a blessing to them.

Eust. 'Tis our weakness;
Blind to events, we reason in the dark,
And fondly apprehend what none e'er found,
Or ever shall, pleasure and pain unmixt;
And flatter and torment ourselves by turns,
With what shall never be.

Y. Wilm. I'll go this instant
To seek my Charlotte, and explore my fate.

Eust. What, in that foreign habit!

Y. Wilm. That's a trifle,
Not worth my thoughts.

Eust. The hardships you've endured,
And your long stay beneath the burning zone,
Where one eternal sultry summer reigns,
Have marred the native hue of your complexion:
Methinks you look more like a sun-burnt Indian,
Than a Briton.

Y. Wilm. Well, 'tis no matter, Eustace;
I hope my mind's not altered for the worse,
And for my outside—But inform me, friend,
When I may hope to see you.

Eust. When you please:
You'll find me at the inn.

Y. Wilm. When I have learn'd my doom, expect me there.
'Till then, farewell!

Eust. Farewell! Success attend you!
[*Exit* EUSTACE.

Y. Wilm. We flatter and torment ourselves by turns,
With what shall never be. Amazing folly!
We stand exposed to many unavoidable
Calamities, and therefore fondly labour
T' increase their number and inforce their weight,
By our fantastic hopes and groundless fears:
For one severe distress impos'd by fate,
What numbers doth tormenting fear create!
Deceiv'd by hope, Ixion like, we prove
Immortal joys, and seem to rival Jove;
The cloud dissolved, impatient we complain,
And pay for fancied bliss substantial pain. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—CHARLOTTE'S *House.*

Enter CHARLOTTE *thoughtful; and soon after a Servant from the other Side.*

Serv. Madam, a stranger in a foreign habit desires to see you.

Char. In a foreign habit!
'Tis strange and unexpected. But admit him.
[*Exit Servant.*
Who can this stranger be! I know no foreigner—

Enter Young WILMOT.

Nor any man like this.

Y. Wilm. Ten thousand joys!
[*Going to embrace her.*

Char. Sir, you are too bold—Forbear, and let me know
What business brought you here, or leave the place.

Y. Wilm. Perfidious maid! Am I forgot, or scorned?

Char. Can I forget a man I never knew?

Y. Wilm. My fears are true; some other has her heart:
She's lost: My fatal absence has undone me.
[*Aside.*
O! could thy Wilmot have forgot thee, Charlotte!

Char. Ha! Wilmot! say! what do your words import?
O gentle stranger! ease my swelling heart;
What dost thou know of Wilmot?

Y. Wilmot. This I know:
When all the winds of heaven seemed to conspire
Against the stormy main, and dreadful peals
Of rattling thunder deafened every ear,
And drowned the affrightened mariners' loud cries;
When livid lightning spread its sulphurous flames
Through all the dark horizon, and disclosed
The raging seas incensed to his destruction;
When the good ship, in which he was embarked,
Broke, and, o'erwhelmed by the impetuous surge,
Sunk to the oozy bottom of the deep,
And left him struggling with the warring waves;
In that dread moment, in the jaws of death,
When his strength failed, and every hope forsook him,
And his last breath pressed towards his trembling lips,
The neighbouring rocks, that echoed to his moan,
Returned no sound articulate but—Charlotte.

Char. The fatal tempest, whose description strikes
The hearer with astonishment, is ceased,
And Wilmot is at rest. The fiercer storm
Of swelling passions, that o'erwhelms the soul,
And rages worse than the mad foaming seas
In which he perished, ne'er shall vex him more.

Y. Wilm. Thou seem'st to think he's dead; enjoy that thought;
Persuade yourself that what you wish is true,
And triumph in your falsehood. Yes, he's dead;
You were his fate. The cruel winds and waves,
That cast him pale and breathless on the shore,
Spared him for greater woes—to know his Charlotte,
Forgetting all her vows to him and heaven,
Had cast him from her thoughts—Then, then he died;
But never can have rest. Even now he wanders,
A sad, repining, discontented ghost,
The unsubstantial shadow of himself,
And pours his plaintive groans in thy deaf ears,
And stalks, unseen, before thee.

Char. 'Tis enough:
Detested falsehood now has done its worst.
And art thou dead? And wouldst thou die, my Wilmot,
For one thou thought'st unjust? Thou soul of truth!
What must be done? Which way shall I express
Unutterable woe? Or how convince
Thy dear departed spirit of the love,
The eternal love, and never-failing faith,
Of thy much injured, lost, despairing Charlotte?

Y. Wilm. Be still, my fluttering heart; hope not too soon!
Perhaps I dream, and this is all illusion. [*Aside.*

Char. If, as some teach, the spirit after death,
Free from the bounds and ties of sordid earth,
Can trace us to our most concealed retreat,
See all we act, and read our very thoughts;
To thee, O Wilmot! kneeling I appeal.
If e'er I swerved in action, word, or thought,
Or ever wish'd to taste a joy on earth
That centred not in thee, since last we parted;
May we ne'er meet again, but thy loud wrongs
So close the ear of Mercy to my cries,
That I may never see those bright abodes,
Where truth and virtue only have admission,
And thou inhabit'st now!

Y. Wilm. Assist me, Heaven!
Preserve my reason, memory, and sense!
O moderate my fierce tumultuous joys,
Or their excess will drive me to distraction.
O Charlotte! Charlotte! lovely, virtuous maid!
Can thy firm mind, in spite of time and absence,
Remain unshaken, and support its truth,
And yet thy frailer memory retain
No image, no idea of thy lover?
Why dost thou gaze so wildly? Look on me;
Turn thy dear eyes this way; observe me well.
Have scorching climates, time, and this strange habit,
So changed and so disguised thy faithful Wilmot,

That nothing in my voice, my face, or mien,
Remains to tell my Charlotte I am he!
[*After viewing him some time, she approaches weeping, and gives him her hand; and then turning towards him, sinks upon his bosom.*]
Why dost thou weep? Why dost thou tremble thus?
Why doth thy panting heart and cautious touch
Speak thee but half convinced? Whence are thy fears?
Why art thou silent? Canst thou doubt me still?
Char. No, Wilmot! no; I'm blind with too much light,
O'ercome with wonder, and oppressed with joy.
This vast profusion of extreme delight,
Rising at once, and bursting from despair,
Defies the aid of words, and mocks description.
But for one sorrow, one sad scene of anguish,
That checks the swelling torrent of my joys,
I could not bear the transport.
Y. Wilm. Let me know it:
Give me my portion of thy sorrow, Charlotte!
Let me partake thy grief, or bear it for thee.
Char. Alas! my Wilmot! these sad tears are thine;
They flow for thy misfortunes. I am pierced
With all the agonies of strong compassion,
With all the bitter anguish you must feel,
When you shall hear your parents—
Y. Wilm. Are no more!
Char. You apprehend me wrong.
Y. Wilm. Perhaps I do;
Perhaps you mean to say, the greedy grave
Was satisfied with one, and one is left
To bless my longing eyes. But which, my Charlotte?
Char. Afflict yourself no more with groundless fears:
Your parents both are living. Their distress,
The poverty to which they are reduced,
In spite of my weak aid, was what I mourned:
That poverty in age, to them whose youth
Was crowned with full prosperity, I fear,
Is worse, much worse, than death.
Y. Wilm. My joy's complete!
My parents living, and possessed of thee!—
From this blest hour, the happiest of my life,
I'll date my rest. My anxious hopes and fears,
My weary travels, and my dangers past,
Are now rewarded all: Now I rejoice
In my success, and count my riches gain.
For know, my soul's best treasure! I have wealth
Enough to glut even avarice itself:
No more shall cruel want, or proud contempt,
Oppress the sinking spirits, or insult
The hoary heads, of those who gave me being.
Char. 'Tis now, O riches! I conceive your worth:
You are not base, nor can you be superfluous,
But when misplaced in base and sordid hands.
Fly, fly, my Wilmot! leave thy happy Charlotte!
Thy filial piety, the sighs and tears
Of thy lamenting parents call thee hence.
Y. Wilm. I have a friend, the partner of my voyage,
Who, in the storm last night, was shipwrecked with me.
Char. Shipwrecked last night!—O you immortal powers!
What have you suffered! How were you preserved?
Y. Wilm. Let that, and all my other strange escapes
And perilous adventures, be the theme
Of many a happy winter night to come.
My present purpose was to intreat my angel,
To know this friend, this other better Wilmot,
And come with him this evening to my father's:
I'll send him to thee.
Char. I consent with pleasure.
Y. Wilm. Heavens! what a night! How shall I bear my joy!
My parents', your's, my friend's, all will be mine.
If such the early hopes, the vernal bloom,
The distant prospect of my future bliss,
Then what the ruddy autumn! What the fruit,
The full possession of thy heavenly charms!
The tedious, dark, and stormy winter o'er,
The hind, that all its pinching hardships bore,
With transport sees the weeks appointed bring
The cheerful, promis'd, gay, delightful spring;
The painted meadows, the harmonious woods,
The gentle zephyrs and unbridled floods,
With all their charms, his ravish'd thoughts employ,
But the rich harvest must complete his joy.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*A Street in Penryn.*

Enter RANDAL.

Rand. Poor! poor! and friendless! whither shall I wander,
And to what point direct my views and hopes?
A menial servant!—No—What! shall I live,
Here in this land of freedom, live distinguished,
And marked the willing slave of some proud subject,
To swell his useless train for broken fragments,
The cold remains of his superfluous board?
I would aspire to something more and better.
Turn thy eyes then to the prolific ocean,
Whose spacious bosom opens to thy view:
There deathless honour, and unenvied wealth,
Have often crowned the brave adventurer's toils.
This is the native uncontested right,
The fair inheritance, of every Briton,
That dares put in his claim—My choice is made;
A long farewell to Cornwall, and to England!
If I return—But stay, what stranger's this,
Who, as he views me, seems to mend his pace?

Enter Young WILMOT.

Y. Wilm. Randal!—The dear companion of my youth!—
Sure lavish fortune means to give me all
I could desire, or ask for, this blessed day,

And leave me nothing to expect hereafter.
Rand. Your pardon, sir! I know but one on earth
Could properly salute me by the title
You're pleased to give me, and I would not think
That you are he—that you are Wilmot.
Y. Wilm. Why?
Rand. Because I could not bear the disappointment,
If I should be deceived.
Y. Wilm. I am pleased to hear it:
Thy friendly fears better express thy thoughts
Than words could do.
Rand. O! Wilmot! O! my master!
Are you returned?
Y. Wilm. I have not yet embraced
My parents—I shall see you at my father's?
Rand. No, I'm discharged from thence—O, sir! such ruin—
Y. Wilm. I've heard it all, and hasten to relieve them:
Sure Heaven hath blessed me to that very end:
I've wealth enough; nor shalt thou want a part.
Rand. I have a part already—I am blessed
In your success, and share in all your joys.
Y. Wilm. I doubt it not. But tell me, dost thou think,
My parents not suspecting my return,
That I may visit them, and not be known?
Rand. 'Tis hard for me to judge. You are already
Grown so familiar to me, that I wonder
I knew you not at first: yet it may be;
For you're much altered, and they think you dead.
Y. Wilm. This is certain, Charlotte beheld me long,
And heard my loud reproaches, and complaints,
Without remembering she had ever seen me.
My mind at ease grows wanton: I would fain
Refine on happiness. Why may I not
Indulge my curiosity, and try
If it be possible, by seeing first
My parents as a stranger, to improve
Their pleasure by surprise?
Rand. It may indeed
Enhance your own, to see from what despair
Your timely coming, and unhoped success,
Have given you power to raise them.
Y. Wilm. I remember,
E'er since we learned together, you excelled
In writing fairly, and could imitate
Whatever hand you saw with great exactness.
I therefore beg you'll write, in Charlotte's name
And character, a letter to my father;
And recommend me, as a friend of hers,
To his acquaintance.
Rand. Sir, if you desire it—
And yet—
Y. Wilm. Nay, no objections! 'Twill save time,
Most precious with me now. For the deception,
If doing what my Charlotte will approve,
'Cause done for me and with a good intent,
Deserves the name, I'll answer it myself.
If this succeeds, I purpose to defer
Discovering who I am till Charlotte comes.
And thou, and all who love me, ev'ry friend
Who witnesses my happiness to-night,
Will, by partaking, multiply my joys.
Rand. You grow luxurious in imagination.
Could I deny you aught, I would not write
This letter. To say true, I ever thought
Your boundless curiosity a weakness.
Y. Wilm. What canst thou blame in this?
Rand. Your pardon, sir!
Perhaps I spoke too freely;
I'm ready to obey your orders.
Y. Wilm. I am much thy debtor,
But I shall find a time to quit thy kindness.
O Randal! but imagine to thyself
The floods of transport, the sincere delight,
That all my friends will feel, when I disclose
To my astonished parents my return,
And then confess, that I have well contrived,
By giving others joy, to exalt my own.
As pain and anguish, in a gen'rous mind,
While kept conceal'd, and to ourselves confin'd,
Want half their force; so pleasure, when it flows
In torrents round us, more extatic grows.
[*Exeunt*

SCENE III.—*Old* WILMOT'S *House discovered.*

Old WILMOT *and* AGNES.

O. Wilm. Here, take this Seneca, this haughty pedant,
Who, governing the master of mankind,
And awing power imperial, prates of patience;
And praises poverty—possessed of millions:
—Sell him, and buy us bread. The scantiest meal
The vilest copy of his book e'er purchased,
Will give us more relief in this distress,
Than all his boasted precepts.—Nay, no tears;
Keep them to move compassion when you beg.
Agn. My heart may break, but never stoop to that.
O. Wilm. Nor would I live to see it—But dispatch. [*Exit* AGNES.
Where must I charge this length of misery,
That gathers force each moment as it rolls,
And must at last o'erwhelm me, but on hope:
Vain, flattering, delusive, groundless hope,
That has for years deceived me?—Had I thought
As I do now, as wise men ever think,
When first this hell of poverty o'ertook me,
That power to die implies a right to do it,
And should be used when life becomes a pain,
What plagues had I prevented!—True, my wife
Is still a slave to prejudice and fear—
I would not leave my better part, the dear
[*Weeps.*
Faithful companion of my happier days,
To bear the weight of age and want alone.
—I'll try once more—

Enter AGNES, *and after her Young* WILMOT.

O. Wilm. Returned, my life! so soon!
Agn. The unexpected coming of this stranger
Prevents my going yet.

Y. Wilm. You are, I presume,
The gentleman to whom this is directed.—
[*Gives a letter.*
What wild neglect, the token of despair,
What indigence, what misery appears
In this once happy house! What discontent,
What anguish and confusion fill the faces
Of its dejected owners!
O. Wilm. [*Having read the letter.*]
—Sir, such welcome
As this poor house affords, you may command.
Our ever friendly neighbour—Once we hoped
To have called fair Charlotte by a dearer name,
But we have done with hope—I pray excuse
This incoherence—We had once a son. [*Weeps.*
Agn. That you are come from that dear virtuous maid,
Revives in us the memory of a loss,
Which, though long since, we have not learned to bear.
Y. Wilm. The joy to see them, and the bitter pain
It is to see them thus, touches my soul
With tenderness and grief, that will o'erflow.
—They know me not, and yet I shall, I fear,
Defeat my purpose, and betray myself. [*Aside.*
O. Wilm. The lady calls you here her valued friend;
Enough, though nothing more should be implied,
To recommend you to our best esteem;
—A worthless acquisition! May she find
Some means that better may express her kindness!
But she, perhaps, has purposed to enrich
You with herself, and end her fruitless sorrow
For one, whom death alone can justify
For leaving her so long. If it be so,
May you repair his loss, and be to Charlotte
A second, happier Wilmot! Partial nature,
Who only favours youth, as feeble age
Were not her offspring, or below her care,
Has sealed our doom: No second hope shall spring,
To dry our tears, and dissipate despair.
Agn. The last and most abandoned of our kind,
By heaven and earth neglected or despised,
The loathsome grave, that robbed us of our son,
And all our joys in him, must be our refuge.
Y. Wilm. Let ghosts unpardoned, or devoted fiends,
Fear without hope, and wail in such sad strains;
But grace defend the living from despair!
The darkest hours precede the rising sun,
And mercy may appear, when least expected.
O. Wilm. This I have heard a thousand times repeated,
And have, believing, been as oft deceived.
Y. Wilm. Behold in me an instance of its truth.
At sea twice shipwrecked, and as oft the prey
Of lawless pirates; by the Arabs thrice
Surprised, and robbed on shore; and once reduced
To worse than these, the sum of all distress
That the most wretched feel on this side hell,
Ev'n slavery itself: Yet here I stand,
Except one trouble, that will quickly end,
The happiest of mankind.
O. Wilm. A rare example
Of fortune's changes; apter to surprise
Or entertain, than comfort or instruct.
If you would reason from events, be just,
And count, when you escaped, how many perished;
And draw your inference thence.
Agn. Alas! Who knows,
But we were rendered childless by some storm,
In which you, though preserved, might bear a part?
Y. Wilm. How has my curiosity betrayed me
Into superfluous pain! I faint with fondness;
And shall, if I stay longer, rush upon them,
Proclaim myself their son, kiss and embrace them,
'Till, with the excess of pleasure and surprise,
Their souls, transported, their frail mansions quit,
And leave them breathless in my longing arms.
By circumstances then and slow degrees,
They must be let into a happiness,
Too great for them to bear at once, and live:
That Charlotte will perform. I need not feign
To ask an hour for rest. [*Aside.*] Sir, I entreat
The favour to retire, where for a while
I may repose myself. You will excuse
This freedom, and the trouble that I give you.
'Tis long since I have slept, and nature calls.
O. Wilm. I pray, no more: Believe, we're only troubled,
That you should think any excuse were needful.
Y. Wilm. The weight of this to me is some incumbrance,
[*Takes a casket out of his bosom, and gives it to his mother.*
And its contents of value: If you please
To take the charge of it 'till I awake,
I shall not rest the worse. If I should sleep
'Till I am asked for, as perhaps I may,
I beg that you would wake me.
Agn. Doubt it not:
Distracted as I am with various woes,
I shall remember that. [*Exit, with Old* Wilmot.
Y. Wilm. Merciless grief!
What ravage has it made! how has it changed
Her lovely form and mind! I feel her anguish,
And dread I know not what from her despair.
My father too——O grant them patience, Heaven!
A little longer, a few short hours more,
And all their cares, and mine, shall end for ever.
How near is misery and joy allied!
Nor eye, nor thought can their extremes divide:
A moment's space is long, and lightning slow
To fate descending to reverse our woe,
Or blast our hopes, and all our joys o'erthrow.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Scene continues.*

Enter AGNES *alone, with the casket in her hand.*

Agn. Who should this stranger be? And then this casket—
He says it is of value, and yet trusts it,
As if a trifle, to a stranger's hand—
His confidence amazes me—Perhaps
It is not what he says—I am strongly tempted
To open it, and see— No, let it rest!
Why should I pry into the cares of others,
Who have so many sorrows of my own?
With how much ease the spring gives way—Surprising!
My eyes are dazzled, and my ravished heart
Leaps at the glorious sight. How bright's the lustre,
And how immense the worth, of these fair jewels!
Ay, such a treasure would expel for ever
Base poverty, and all its abject train;
Famine; the cold neglect of friends; the scorn,
O, more provoking pity, of the world.
Plenty, content, and power might take their turn,
And lofty pride bare its aspiring head
At our approach, and once more bend before us.
A pleasing dream! 'Tis past; and now I wake.
For sure it was a happiness to think,
Though but a moment, such a treasure mine.
Nay, it was more than thought——I saw and touched
The bright temptation, and I see it yet—
'Tis here—'tis mine—I have it in possession—
Must I resign it? Must I give it back?
Am I in love with misery and want,
To rob myself, and court so vast a loss?
Retain it then—But how? There is a way—
Why sinks my heart? Why does my blood run cold?
Why am I thrilled with horror? 'Tis not choice,
But dire necessity suggests the thought.

Enter Old WILMOT.

O. Wilm. The mind contented, with how little pains
The wandering senses yield to soft repose!
He's fallen asleep already—Happy man!
What dost thou think, my Agnes, of our guest?
He seems to me a youth of great humanity:
Just ere he closed his eyes, that swam in tears,
He wrung my hand, and pressed it to his lips;
And with a look, that pierced me to the soul,
Begged me to comfort thee: And—dost thou hear me?
What art thou gazing on?—Fie, 'tis not well!
This casket was delivered to you closed:
Why have you opened it? Should this be known,
How mean must we appear!

Agn. And who shall know it?

O. Wilm. There is a kind of pride, a decent dignity,
Due to ourselves; which, spite of our misfortunes,
May be maintained, and cherished to the last.
To live without reproach, and without leave
To quit the world, shews sovereign contempt,
And noble scorn of its relentless malice.

Agn. Shews sovereign madness, and a scorn of sense.
Pursue no farther this detested theme:
I will not die; I will not leave the world
For all that you can urge, until compelled.

O. Wilm. To chase a shadow, when the setting sun
Is darting his last rays, were just as wise
As your anxiety for fleeting life,
Now the last means for its support are failing:
Were famine not as mortal as the sword,
Your warmth might be excused—But take thy choice:
Die how you will, you shall not die alone.

Agn. Nor live, I hope.

O. Wilm. There is no fear of that.

Agn. Then, we'll live both.

O. Wilm. Strange folly! where the means?

Agn. There—those jewels!

O. Wilm. Ha! Take heed!
Perhaps thou dost but try me—yet take heed!
There's nothing so monstrous but the mind of man,
In some conditions, may be brought to approve:
Theft, sacrilege, treason, and parricide,
When flattering opportunity enticed,
And desperation drove, have been committed
By those, who once would start to hear them named.

Agn. And add to these detested suicide,
Which, by a crime much less, we may avoid.

O. Wilm. How couldst thou form a thought so very damning?
So advantageous, so secure, and easy;
And yet so cruel, and so full of horror!

Agn. 'Tis less impiety, less against nature,
To take another's life, than end our own.

O. Wilm. No matter which the less or greater crime:
Howe'er we may deceive ourselves or others,
We act from inclination, not by rule,
Or, none could act amiss: and that all err,
None but the conscious hypocrite denies.
O! what is man, his excellence and strength,
When in an hour of trial and desertion,
Reason, his noblest power, may be suborned
To plead the cause of vile assassination!

Agn. You're too severe: Reason may justly plead
For our own preservation.

O. Wilm. Rest contented:

Whate'er resistance I may seem to make,
I am betrayed within: My will's seduced,
And my whole soul infected. The desire
Of life returns, and brings with it a train
Of appetites, that rage to be supplied!
Whoever stands to parley with temptation,
Parleys to be o'ercome.

Agn. Then nought remains
But the swift execution of a deed,
That is not to be thought on, or delayed—

O. Wilm. Generous, unhappy man! O! what could move thee
To put thy life and fortune in the hands
Of wretches mad with anguish!

Agn. By what means
Shall we effect his death?

O. Wilm. Why, what a fiend!
How cruel, how remorseless and impatient
Have pride and poverty made thee!

Agn. Barbarous man!
Whose wasteful riots ruined our estate,
And drove our son, ere the first down had spread
His rosy cheeks, spite of my sad presages,
Earnest intreaties, agonies, and tears,
To seek his bread amongst strangers, and to perish
In some remote, inhospitable land;
The loveliest youth, in person and in mind,
That ever crowned a groaning mother's pains!
Where was thy pity, where thy patience then?
Thou cruel husband! thou unnatural father!
Thou most remorseless, most ungrateful man!
To waste my fortune, rob me of my son,
To drive me to despair, and then reproach me
For being what thou hast made me!

O. Wilm. Dry thy tears:
I ought not to reproach thee. I confess
That thou hast suffered much: So have we both.
But chide no more; I am wrought up to thy purpose.
The poor, ill-fated, unsuspecting victim,
Ere he reclined him on the fatal couch,
From which he's ne'er to rise, took off the sash,
And costly dagger that thou saw'st him wear,
And thus, unthinking, furnished us with arms
Against himself. Steal to the door,
And bring me word, if he be still asleep.
[*Exit* AGNES.
Or I'm deceived, or he pronounced himself
The happiest of mankind. Deluded wretch!
Thy thoughts are perishing, thy youthful joys,
Touched by the icy hand of grisly Death,
Are withering in their bloom—But, thought extinguished,
He'll never know the loss,
Nor feel the bitter pangs of disappointment—
Then I was wrong in counting him a wretch:
To die well pleased,
Is all the happiest of mankind can hope for.
To be a wretch, is to survive the loss
Of every joy, and even hope itself,
As I have done—Why do I mourn him then?
For, by the anguish of my tortured soul,
He's to be envied, if compared with me.

Enter AGNES, *with Young* WILMOT'S *dagger.*

Agn. The stranger sleeps at present; but so restless
His slumbers seem, they can't continue long.
Here, I've secured his dagger.

O. Wilm. O Agnes! Agnes! if there be a hell,
'Tis just we should expect it.
[*Goes to take the dagger, but lets it fall.*

Agn. Shake off this panic, and be more yourself!

O. Wilm. What's to be done? On what had we determined?

Agn. You're quite dismayed.
[*Takes up the dagger.*

O. Wilm. Give me the fatal steel.
'Tis but a single murder,
Necessity, impatience, and despair,
The three wide mouths of that true Cerberus,
Grim poverty, demand: they shall be stopped.
Ambition, persecution, and revenge,
Devour their millions daily: And shall I—
But follow me, and see how little cause
You had to think, there was the least remain
Of manhood, pity, mercy, or remorse,
Left in this savage breast.
[*Going the wrong way.*

Agn. Where do you go?
The street is that way.

O. Wilm. True; I had forgot.

Agn. Quite, quite confounded!

O. Wilm. Well, I recover.—I shall find the way. [*Exit.*

Agn. O softly! softly! The least noise undoes us.—
What are we doing? Misery and want
Are lighter ills than this! I cannot bear it!—
Stop, hold thy hand!—Inconstant, wretched woman!
What! doth my heart recoil?——O Wilmot! Wilmot!
What power shall I invoke to aid thee, Wilmot!
[*Exit.*

Enter CHARLOTTE, EUSTACE, *and* RANDAL.

Char. What strange neglect! The doors are all unbarred,
And not a living creature to be seen!

Enter Old WILMOT *and* AGNES.

Char. Sir, we are come to give and to receive
A thousand greetings—Ha! what can this mean
Why do you look with such amazement on us?
Are these your transports for your son's return?
Where is my Wilmot?—Has he not been here?
Would he defer your happiness so long,
Or could a habit so disguise your son,
That you refused to own him?

Agn. Heard you that?—
What prodigy of horror is disclosing,
To render murder venial!

O. Wilm. Prithee, peace!
The miserable damned suspend their howling,

And the swift orbs are fixed in deep attention.
Rand. What mean these dreadful words, and frantic air?
That is the dagger my young master wore.
Eust. My mind misgives me. Do not stand to gaze
On these dumb phantoms of despair and horror!
Let us search further; Randal, shew the way.
[*Exeunt.*
Agn. Let life forsake the earth, and light the sun,
And death and darkness bury in oblivion
Mankind and all their deeds, that no posterity
May ever rise to hear our horrid tale,
Or view the grave of such detested parricides!
O. Wilm. Curses and deprecations are in vain:
The sun will shine, and all things have their course,
When we, the curse and burden of the earth,
Shall be absorbed, and mingled with its dust.
Our guilt and desolation must be told,
From age to age, to teach desponding mortals,
How far beyond the reach of human thought
Heaven, when incensed, can punish—Die thou first. [*Stabs* AGNES.
I durst not trust thy weakness.
Agn. Ever kind,
But most in this!
O. Wilm. I will not long survive thee.
Agn. Do not accuse thy erring mother, Wilmot,
With too much rigour, when we meet above!
To give thee life for life, and blood for blood,
Is not enough. Had I ten thousand lives,
I'd give them all to speak my penitence,
Deep, and sincere, and equal to my crime.
Oh Wilmot! oh my son! my son! [*Dies.*

Enter RANDAL *and* EUSTACE.

Eust. O Wilmot! Wilmot!
Are these the fruits of all thy anxious cares
For thy ungrateful parents?——Cruel fiends!
O. Wilm. What whining fool art thou, who would'st usurp
My sovereign right of grief!—Was he thy son?—
Say, canst thou shew thy hands reeking with blood,
That flowed, through purer channels, from thy loins?
Compute the sands that bound the spacious ocean,
And swell their number with a single grain;
Increase the noise of thunder with thy voice;
Or, when the raging wind lays nature waste,
Assist the tempest with thy feeble breath;
But name not thy faint sorrow, with the anguish
Of a curst wretch, who only hopes from this
[*Stabbing himself.*
To change the scene, but not relieve his pain!
Rand. A dreadful instance of the last remorse!
May all your woes end here!
O. Wilm. O would they end
A thousand ages hence, I then should suffer
Much less than I deserve. Yet let me say,
You'll do but justice to inform the world,
This horrid deed, that punishes itself,
Was not intended, thinking him our son;
For that we knew not till it was too late.
Proud, and impatient under our afflictions,
While Heaven was labouring to make us happy,
We brought this dreadful ruin on ourselves.
Mankind may learn——but——oh—— [*Dies.*
Rand. Heaven grant they may!
And may thy penitence atone thy crime!—
Tend well the hapless Charlotte, and hear hence
These bleeding victims of despair and pride;
Toll the death-bell! and follow to the grave
The wretched parents and ill-fated son.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM.

BY

LILLO.

FINISHED BY HOADLY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

The Mayor of Feversham.
ARDEN, *a gentleman of Feversham.*
FRANKLIN, *his friend.*
MICHAEL, *servant to Arden.*
GREEN, *enemy to Arden.*
MOSBY, *criminally attached to Alicia.*
BRADSHAW, *a citizen of Feversham.*
BLACK WILL, } *ruffians.*
GEORGE SHAKEBAG, }
LORD CHEYNEY.
ADAM FOWL, *an innkeeper.*
A Servant to Arden.
Officers, &c.

WOMEN.

ALICIA, *wife to Arden.*
MARIA, *sister to Mosby.*

SCENE,—*Feversham, in Kent.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Street before* ARDEN'S *Door.*

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. The morning's dark, and horrid as my purpose.
Thrice have my snares been laid for Arden's life,
And thrice hath he escaped. I am not safe:
The living may revenge. Oh! could I win
Alicia to conspire her husband's fall,
Then might I say, security, thou'rt mine,
And laugh at all to come. For other instruments,
There's Green: he bears him hard about this suit
For the abbey-lands, to which the hot youth pleads
Some fancied right. Michael, the trencher favourite,
A bastard, bred of Arden's charity,
He has been privy to our secret joys,
And, on that trust presuming, loves my sister—
Winks at adultery, and may at murder.
Maria is his price. I've placed her here,
Companion of my sweet Alicia's hours,
To spread her charms forever in his eye:
To her are all my visits. But Alicia—
She must, she shall comply: when to my arms

Her honour she resigned, her fond reluctance whispered,
She could deny me nothing. This to try.
[*Exit into* ARDEN'S *house.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber.*

Enter ARDEN *in his Night-gown.*

Ard. Unhappy Arden, whither canst thou wander
To lay thy heavy load of sorrows down!
Will change of place relieve the afflicted mind,
Or does all nature yield a balm to cure
The pangs of slighted love and broken faith?
Ungrateful false Alicia! false with Mosby,
The vile dependent of my foe professed,
Lord Clifford's full-fed flatterer! O damned!
Come, Franklin, come: Arden, thy friend, invites thee;
And let me pour my griefs into thy bosom,
And find in friendship what I've lost in love.

Enter ALICIA.

Alic. Why, Arden, do you leave your bed thus early?
Have cold and darkness greater charms than I?
There was a time when winter nights were short,
And Arden chid the morn, that called him from me.
Ard. This deep dissembling, this hypocrisy,
(The last, worst state of a degenerate mind)
Speaks her in vice determined and mature.
[*Aside.*
Alic. What maid, that knows man's variable nature,
Would sell her free estate for marriage bonds?
From vows and oaths, and every servile tye,
The tyrant man at pleasure is set free;
The holy nuptial bond leaves him at large;
Yet vests him with a power, that makes us slaves.
'Tis heavenly this—
Ard. To stop my just reproach,
Art thou the first to tax the marriage state?
Alic. Are you not jealous? do you not give ear
To vain surmises and malicious tongues,
That hourly wound my yet untainted fame?
Ard. And wouldst thou make me author of the shame,
Thy guilt has brought on us!—I'll bear no longer.
The traitor Mosby, cursed, detested Mosby,
Shall render an account for both your crimes.
Alic. What do I hear! [*Aside.*
Ard. The base mechanic slave
Shall answer with his blood.
Alic. O hear me speak!
Ard. No, I am deaf: As thou hast ever been
To fame, to virtue, and my just complaints.
Alic. Thus on my knees—
Ard. Adultress! dost thou kneel
And weep, and pray, and bend thy stubborn heart
(Stubborn to me) to sue for him? Away!
Away this instant, lest I kill thee too.
[*Recovering himself.*
No—not the hell, thou hast kindled in this bosom,
Shall make me shed thy blood.
Alic. I do not hope it.
Ard. For me, be as immortal as thy shame.
Alic. I see your cruel purpose: I must live,
To see your hand and honour stained with blood,
Your ample fortune seized on by the state,
Your life a forfeit to the cruel laws.
O Arden, blend compassion with your rage,
And kindly kill me first!
Ard. Not for my sake
Are all thy tears; then had you felt them sooner
Plead not the ruin you have made; but say,
Why have you driven me to these extremes?
Why sacrificed my peace, and your own fame,
By corresponding with a menial slave?
Alic. Thou canst not think, that I have wronged thy bed?
Ard. Would I could not!
Alic. By Heaven—
Ard. No perjuries.
But now, as you lay slumbering by my side,
I still awake, anxious and full of thought,
(For thou hast banished sleep from these sad eyes
With gentle accents, thrilling with desire,
You called on Mosby. Love made me doubt my ears,
And question, if the dark and silent night
Conspired not with my fancy to deceive me:
But soon I lost the painful pleasing hope;
Again you called upon your minion Mosby.
Confirmed, I strove to fly your tainted bed,
But, wanting strength, sunk lifeless on my pillow.
You threw your eager arms about my neck,
You pressed my bloodless cheeks with your warm lips,
Which glowed, adultress! with infernal heat;
And called, a third time, on the villain Mosby.
Alic. A dream indeed, if I e'er called on him.
Ard. Thy guilty dreams betray thy waking thoughts.
Alic. I know I'm simple, thoughtless, and unguarded;
And what is carelessness you construe guilt.
Yet were I weak as those fantastic visions,
Sure I could never have condemned you, Arden,
On circumstances and an idle dream.
Ard. But such a dream!—
Alic. Yet was it but a dream,
Which, though I not remember, I abhor,
And mourn with tears, because it gives you pain.
Arden, you do not wish me innocent,
Or on suspicions could you doom me guilty?
Ard. Not wish thee innocent? do sinking mariners,
When struggling with the raging seas for life,
Wish the assistance of some friendly plank?
'Tis that, and that alone, can bring me comfort.
Alic. O jealousy! thou fierce remorseless fiend,
Degenerate, most unnatural child of love!
How shall I chase thee from my Arden's bosom?
Ard. There is a way, an easy way, Alicia.
Alic. O name it—speak.
Ard. What's past may be forgotten.
Your future conduct—
Alic. You distract me, Arden.

Say, how shall I convince you of my truth?
Ard. I ask but this: never see Mosby more!
[*He starts.*
By Heaven, she's dumb!
Alic. O how shall I conceal
My own confusion, and elude his rage? [*Aside.*
Ard. Thou'rt lost, Alicia!—lost to me—and Heaven.
Alic. Indeed I'm lost, if you unkindly doubt me.
Ard. Wilt thou, then, ne'er converse with Mosby more?
Alic. If I e'er do, may Heaven, and you, forsake me!
Ard. You'll keep your word, Alicia! Prithee, say—
Alic. You'll break my heart.
Ard. I'd rather break my own.
Then thou art innocent and lov'st me still?
Alic. And ever will.
Ard. Give me thy hand—thy heart!
O give me that!
Alic. That always was your own.
Ard. Thou flatterer—then whence this cruel strife?
Still art thou cold; nor warm are thy embraces,
Nor sparkle in thine eyes the fires of love:
Cold, cold, and comfortless.
Alic. Indeed you fright me.
Ard. 'Tis possible——
Alic. What?
Ard. That thou may'st yet deceive me.
Alic. O! I am wretched!
Ard. Both perhaps are so.
But, if thou ever loved'st, thou'lt not despise me,
And wilt forgive me, if indeed I've wronged thee,
As I've forgiven thee—Pity, I'm sure, I need.
[*Exit* ARD.
Alic. Thou hast it, Arden, even from her, that wrongs thee.
All, all shall pity thee, and curse Alicia.
Can I feel this, and further tempt the stream
Of guilty love! O whither am I fallen!

Enter MARIA.

Mar. An happy day, Alicia; and may each morn
Of coming life be ushered with like joy.
Franklin, from court returned, has brought the grant
Of the abbey-lands, confirmed by the young king,
To Arden for his life; nor will deliver,
But to himself, the deed.
Alic. A worthy friend!
The grant is not more welcome to my husband,
Than Franklin's company.
Mar. He's flown to meet him.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Madam, your brother Mosby—
Alic. Where is Mosby?
Serv. He waits below.
Alic. O haste, and lead me to him!
Serv. Madam, he but desires to see his sister.
Alic. His sister! what! did he not ask for me?
Mar. Perhaps——
Alic. Pray, give me leave—looks he in health?
Serv. He seems in health.
Alic. Here, and not ask for me!
Seems he or angry then, or melancholy?
Answer me, stock, stone.
Serv. Truly I can't say.
Alic. Thou canst say nothing—Get thee from my sight!
Yet stay—no matter. I'll myself go seek him.
[*Exeunt* ALIC. *and Serv.*
Mar. Where reason is, can passion thus prevail?
[*Exit* MAR.

SCENE III.—*A Parlour in* ARDEN'S *House.*

Enter ALICIA, *meeting* MOSBY.

Alic. Mosby, that brow befits our wayward fate.
The evil hour, long feared, is fallen upon us,
And we shall sink beneath it. Do not frown—
If you're unkind, to whom shall I complain?
Mos. Madam, it was my sister I expected.
Alic. Am I forgotten then? Ungrateful man!
This only could have added to my woes.
Did you but know what I have borne for you,
You would not thus unmoved behold my tears.
Mos. Madam, you make me vain.
Alic. Insult not, Mosby:
You were the first dear object of my love;
And could my heart have made a second choice,
I had not been the object of your scorn:
But duty, gratitude, the love of fame,
And pride of virtue, were too weak to erase
The deep impression of our early vows.
Mos. Therefore you kindly chose to wed another.
Alic. Reproach me not with what I deemed my duty.
Oh! had I thought I could assume the name,
And never know the affection of a wife,
I would have died ere given my hand to Arden.
Mos. You gave him all——
Alic. No, no, I gave him nothing:
Words without truth—an hand without a heart!
But he has found the fraud; the slumbering lion
At length hath roused himself.
Mos. And I must fall
The victim——
Alic. No; he knows not yet his wrongs.
Mos. But quickly will.
Alic. That, that's my greatest fear.
Mos. Then, branded with a strumpet's hated name,
The cause abhorred of shame, of blood, and ruin,
Thou'lt be exposed, and hooted through the world.
Alic. O hide the dreadful image from my view!
Chaste matrons, modest maids, and virtuous wives,
Scorning a weakness which they never knew,
Shall blush, with indignation, at my name!
Mos. My death—but that, though certain—
Alic. Labour not
To drive me to despair. Fain would I hope—
Mos. You may, and be deceived. For me, I know

My fate resolved—and thee the instrument,
The willing instrument of Mosby's ruin!
Inconstant, false Alicia!
Alic. False indeed,
But not to thee, cruel injurious Mosby!
Mos. Injurious! false one! might not all these dangers,
That threaten to involve us both in ruin,
Ere this have been prevented?
Alic. Ha! say on.
Mos. And, not preventing, art not thou the cause?
Alic. Ah! whither, Mosby, whither wouldst thou drive me?
Mos. Nay, didst thou love, or wouldst secure thy fame,
Preserve my life, and bind me yours for ever—
'Tis yet within your power.
Alic. By Arden's death!
Mean'st thou not so? Speak out, and be a devil.
Mos. Yes, 'tis for thee I am so. But your looks
Declare, my death would please you better, madam.
Alic. Exaggerating fiend! be dumb for ever.
His death! I must not cast a glance that way.
Mos. Is there another way? O think, Alicia!
Alic. I will, for that will make me mad, and madness
Were some excuse. Come, kind distraction! come,
And Arden dies! My husband dies for Mosby!
[*Shrieks and runs to* MOSBY.

Enter ARDEN *and* FRANKLIN.

He's here! O save me! tell me, did he hear?
Ard. [*Starting.*] Franklin, support your friend! I shake with horror!
Frank. What moves you thus?
Ard. See!—Mosby with my wife!
Mos. But, madam, I shall spare your farther trouble;
In happy time behold my neighbour here!
[*As taking leave of* ALICIA.
Alic. Mischief and wild confusion have begun,
And desolation waits to close the scene!
[*Exit* ALICIA.
Mos. Sir, I would gladly know, whether your grant,
Of the rich abbey-lands of Feversham,
Be yet confirmed or not?
Ard. What if I tear
Her faithless heart, even in the traitor's sight,
Who taught it falsehood! [*Aside.*
Frank. He is lost in thought,
But I can answer that: It is confirmed.
I brought the deed, with the great seal annexed,
Signed by our pious Edward, and his council.
Mos. I'm satisfied.
Ard. So am not I. By hell,
There's justice in the thought!—I'm strangely tempted. [*Aside.*
Mos. My friend seems wrapt in thought.—I came to advise him,
That Green, by virtue of a former grant
His father long enjoyed——
Ard. For my estate,
The law, and this good seal, is my security;
To them I leave Green, and his groundless claim.
But my just right to false Alicia's heart
(So dearly purchased with a husband's name,
And sacred honour of a gentleman,)
I shall assert myself, and thus secure
From further violation. [*Draws.*
Mos. Her known virtue
Renders the injury, your fancy forms,
A thing of air.
Frank. Impossible to thought!
Whence, Arden, comes this sudden madness on thee,
That your Alicia, ever dear esteemed,
And deeply loved——
Ard. Out on the vile adultress!
But thou, demure, insinuating slave,
Shalt taste my vengeance first. Defend thyself!
Mos. I scorn to take advantage of your rage.
Ard. A coward too! O my consummate shame!
Mos. This I can bear from you.
Ard. Or any man!
Why hangs that useless weapon by thy side,
Thou shame to manhood? Draw! Will nothing move thee! [*Strikes him.*
Frank. Hold! Whither would your mad revenge transport you?
Ard. Shall shameful cowardice protect a villain?
Mos. You chuse a proper place to shew your courage!
Ard. Go on. I'll follow to the ocean's brink,
Or to the edge of some dread precipice,
Where terror and despair shall stop thy flight,
And force thy trembling hand to guard thy life.
Mos. What I endure to save a lady's honour!
[*To* FRANK.
Frank. Your longer stay will but incense him more;
Pray quit the house.
Mos. Sir, I shall take your counsel.
[*Exit* MOSBY.
Ard. He hath escaped me then. But for my wife—
Frank. What has she done?
Ard. Done? must I tell my shame?
Away! begone! lest, from my prey withheld,
I turn, and tear the officious hand, that lets me—
Soft! art thou Franklin? Pardon me, sweet friend——
My spirits fail——I shake——I must retire.
Frank. To your Alicia.
Ard. To my lonely couch;
For I must learn to live without her, Franklin.
Frank. Pray Heaven forbid!
Ard. To hate her, to forget her, if I can:
No easy task for one, who doats like me.
From what an height I'm fallen! Once smiling love
Of all its horrors robbed the blackest night,
And gilt with gladness every ray of light;
Now, tyrant-like, his conquest he maintains,
And o'er his groaning slave with rods of iron reigns! [*Exeunt*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Street.*

Enter GREEN *and* MOSBY.

Green. You pity me, and know not my estate.
I'm ruined, Mosby; thoughtless, and ill-advised,
My riotous youth will leave my age a beggar.
These abbey-lands were all the hopes I'd left;
My whole support.

Mos. Base and ungenerous Arden,
To force a man, born equal to himself,
To beg, or starve!

Green. By Heaven, I will do neither:
I'll let the proud oppressor know———

Mos. How blind is rage!
Who threats his enemy, lends him a sword
To guard himself.

Green. Robbed of the means of life,
What's life itself?—an useless load, a curse,
Which yet I'll dearly sell to my revenge!

Mos. You mean to kill him, then?

Green. I do, by Heaven!

Mos. Suppose you fail?

Green. I can but lose my life.

Mos. Then where is your revenge, when he, secure,
Riots, unbounded, in his ill-got wealth?

Green. What can I do?

Mos. 'Tis plain you wish him dead.

Green. Each moment of his life is to my soul
A tedious age of pain; for while he lives,
Contempt, and all the ills a lazar knows,
Must be my wretched lot, and lengthen out
The miserable hours. What grovelling wretch
Would wish to hold his life on such conditions?

Mos. But change the scene: suppose but Arden dead,
Your land restored, and fortune in your power;
Honour, respect, and all the dear delights,
That wait on wealth, shall wing the joyful hours,
And life contracted seem one happy day.
I hate this Arden, and have stronger motives
Than any you can urge to wish his death.
He has accused, insulted, struck me!
Nay, his fair virtuous wife, on my account——

Green. If fame speaks true, you are to be envied there.

Mos. The world will talk; but be that as it may:
I want not cause nor will, not means nor friends——

Green. Nor opportunity shall long be wanting.

Mos. Enough: his fate is fixed. See! Bradshaw's here!

Enter BRADSHAW.

Brad. Save, save you, gentlemen!

Mos. We thank you, neighbour.
But whither in such haste?

Brad. To the isle of Shippey,
To wait on good lord Cheyney. As he holds
In high esteem our worthy townsman, Arden,
I shall first call on him. 'Tis well I met you,
For yonder two were but bad road-companions.

Green. They seem of desperate fortunes.

Mos. Have they names?

Brad. One I know not; but judge him from his comrade.
The foremost of the two I knew at Boulogne,
Where, in the late king's reign, I served myself.
He was a corporal then; but such a villain—
Beneath a soldier's name; a common cut-throat,
That preys on all mankind, and knows no party.

Mos. An horrid character you give him, Bradshaw.

Brad. No worse than he deserves.

Mos. [*Aside.*] An useful hint:
He shall not want employment.—What's his name?

Brad. Black Will. His family-name I never heard.

Mos. [*To* GREEN.] A word—write you a letter to Alicia:
Disguise your hand. This honest fool may bear it.
Hint at these men. In case her courage fail,
She will be glad to shift the deed on them.

Green. I am instructed.

Enter BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG.

B. Will. What! comrade Bradshaw! How fare you, man? S'blood! dost not remember honest Black Will? Why, thou art grown purse-proud sure.

Brad, Why, you're not easily forgotten, Will. But, prithee, what brings thee to Feversham?

B. Will. A soldier, you know, is at home wherever he comes. *Omne solum forti patria!* There's Latin—Give's a tester.

Brad. In time of peace, we should apply to some honest creditable business, and not turn the name of soldier into vagabond.

B. Will. Yes, as you have done. I'm told you keep a goldsmith's shop here in Feversham, and, like a mechanical rogue, live by cheating. I have more honour.

Brad. Would thou hadst honesty.

B. Will. Where do our honesties differ? I take a purse behind a hedge, and you behind a counter.

Brad. Insolent slave!

B. Will. You *cent. per cent.* rascal! I may find a time to teach you better manners.

Brad. Go, mend thy own.

B. Will. Thou wert always a sneaking fellow, Bradshaw, and couldst never swear, nor get drunk. Come, shall I and my comrade Shakebag taste your ale?

Brad. My house entertains no such guests—Farewell, gentlemen.

Mos. Along with Bradshaw,

And leave the management of these to me.
[*Aside to* Green.
Green. It shall be done.—Bradshaw, a word with thee.
Brad. Your pardon, gentlemen.
[*Exeunt* Green *and* Brad.
B. Will. He was a cadet in the last French war, like other soldiers, then; but now he has got a nest, and feathered it a little, he pretends to reputation. S'blood! had this been a fit place, he had not escaped me so. You have surveyed us well. [*To* Mos.] How do you like us?
Mos. Methinks I read truth, prudence, secrecy,
And courage, writ upon your manly brows.
B. Will. What hellish villainy has this fellow in hand, that makes him fawn upon us? [*Aside.*
Mos. I fear the world's a stranger to your merit.
If this may recommend me to your friendship—
[*Gives a purse.*
B. Will. Of what damned deed is this to be the wages?
Shake. Hast ever an elder brother's throat to cut?
B. Will. Or an old peevish father to be buried?
Mos. Neither of these.
Shake. A rival then, mayhap——
Mos. There you come nearer to me.
Shake. Then speak out;
We're honest, sir.
B. Will. Trusty, and very poor.
Mos. Metal too fit for me. [*Aside.*] Then hear me, sirs.
But you must both, ere I disclose my purpose,
Promise, and bind that promise by your oaths,
Never—[*They both laugh.*] Why this unseasonable mirth?
B. Will. You'd have us swear?——
Mos. Else why did I propose it?
B. Will. There's the jest. Are men, who act in despite of all law, honour, and conscience; who live by blood (as it is plain you think we do) are we free-thinkers, like silly wenches and canting priests, to be confined by oaths?
Shake. Would you bind us, let the price equal the purchase, and we'll go to hell for you with pleasure.
Mos. Horrid! they shake even me, who would employ them. [*Aside.*
I apprehend.—The business then is this:
In Feversham there lives a man, called Arden;
In general esteem, and ample means;
And has a wife, the very pride of nature.
I have been happy long in her affections,
And, he once dead, might with her share his fortunes.
He's jealous too of late, and threatens me.
Love, interest, self-defence, all ask his death.—
B. Will. This man you'd have dispatched?
Mos. I would.
B. Will. Rich, say you?
Mos. Immensely so.
B. Will. And much beloved?
Mos. By all degrees of men.
B. Will. George! this will be a dangerous piece of work.
Shake. Damned dangerous. A man so known; and his reputation too.
B. Will. And then the power and number of his friends must be considered.
Mos. What! does your courage shrink already, sirs?
Shake. No.
B. Will. This is ever the curse of your men of true valour; to be the tools of crafty cowardly knaves, who have not the heart to execute what their heads have projected. It is a damned ungrateful world—What money have you more about you?
Mos. Ten pieces.
B. Will. I've had as much for stealing a dog.
Mos. I give you that as a retaining fee:
When the deed's done, each shall have twice that sum,
And a good horse to further his escape.
B. Will. Sir, will you have him murdered in a church?
Shake. Or on the altar; say the word, and it shall be done.
Mos. Some safer place, the street, highway, or fields,
Will serve my turn as well.
Shake. Just as you please.
Mos. Where may I find you, gentlemen?
B. Will. At Adam Fowl's, the Flower-de-luce.
Mos. I have confederates in this design;
When we have contrived the manner of his death,
I'll send you word.
B. Will. You'll find us always ready.
Mos. And determined?
B. Will. Ay, fear it not. Farewell.
[*Exeunt several ways.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in* Arden's *House.*

Enter Alicia, *with a Letter.*

Alic. He doubts me; yet he dares not tell me so,
But thus, by Green, whets my unsettled mind.
[*Reads.*
'Strike home, or not at all. In case you fail,
'We have found instruments by means of Bradshaw.'
He shall not find me undetermined now.
Hark! Michael's on the watch. If Arden sleeps,
(For so he seemed disposed,) he'll bring me word.
That, that's the safest time. This promised marriage
With Mosby's sister has removed his qualms.

Enter Michael.

Why dost thou break upon me unawares?
What of your master?
Mich. He's scarce sunk to rest,
But full of meditated rage against Mosby.
Alic. He'll sleep in peace ere long.
Mich. Think not on that.
O did Maria bless me with her smiles,
As you do Mosby, had I twenty lives,

I'd risk them all to win her to my arms.
Alic. I prithee leave me, Michael. [*Exit* Michael.] What is nature!
There is a power in love, subdues to itself
All other passions in the human mind.
This wretch, more fearful than the lonely murderer,
Whom, with inquiring eyes, some stranger views,
Would meet the king of terrors undismayed,
For her he loves, and dare him to the combat.
And shall not I preserve my Mosby's life?
And shall not I—A husband!—What's a husband?
I have a soul above the unnatural tie,
That tells me, I'm his right, and only his,
Who won my virgin heart. Ye tender parents,
Whose cruel kindness made your child thus wretched,
Turn not your eyes towards earth to view this scene;
'Twill make you sad in Heaven! [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Room.* Arden *sleeping on a Couch.*

Enter Alicia, *with a dagger in her hand.*

Alic. See! Jealousy, o'erwatched, is sunk to rest,
While fearful guilt knows no security,
But in repeated crimes. My weary eyes,
Each moment apprehensive of his vengeance,
Must seek for rest in vain till his are closed.
Then for our mutual peace, and Mosby's love!
[*Approaching to stab him, starts.*
He wakes—Defend me from his just revenge!
And yet he sees me not, nor moves a finger,
To save his threatened life. Then whence that voice
That pierced my ears, and cried, 'Alicia, hold!'
Can mimic fancy cheat the outward sense,
And form such sounds? If these heart-racking thoughts
Precede the horrid act, what must ensue?
Worse plague I cannot fear from Arden's death;
But from his life—the death of him I love.
Perish the hated husband!—Wherefore hated?
Is he not all that my vain sex could wish?
My eyes, while they survey his graceful form,
Condemn my heart, and wonder how it strayed.
He sighs; he starts; he groans. His body sleeps,
But restless grief denies his mind repose.
Perhaps he dreams of me; perhaps he sees me,
Thus like a fury, broke from deepest hell,
Lust in my heart, and murder in my hand——
[Alicia *drops the dagger.* Arden *starts up.*
Ard. Her dagger, Michael—seize it, and I'm safe.
How strong she is! Oh! What a fearful dream!
Before me still! speak, vision—art thou Alicia,
Or but the coinage of my troubled brain?
Alic. O Arden—husband—lord—
Ard. Art thou my wife?
Thou'rt substance——I am wrapped in wonder—hence——
Hast lost all sense of fear, as well as shame,
That thou dar'st haunt me thus, asleep and waking,
Thou idol, and thou torment of my soul?
Alic. My bleeding heart!
Ard. Away! begone and leave me!
Lest, in the transports of unbounded rage,
I rush upon thee, and deface these charms,
That first enslaved my soul; mangle that face,
Where, spite of falsehood, beauty triumphs still;
Mar that fair frame, and crush thee into atoms.
Avoid me, and be safe—Nay now you drive me hence. [Alicia *kneels, he turns away.*
Cruel and false as thou hast been to me,
I cannot see thee wring thy suppliant hands,
And weep, and kneel in vain. [*Exit* Ard.
Alic. This, this is he
I came prepared to murder! Curst Alicia,
[*Takes up the dagger.*
In thy own bosom plunge the fatal steel,
Or his, who robbed thee of thy fame and virtue.
It will not be—Fear holds my dastard hand:
Those chaster powers, that guard the nuptial bed
From foul pollution, and the hand from blood,
Have left their charge, and I am lost for ever.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Road or Highway near Feversham.*

Black Will *and* Shakebag.

Shake. Damnation! posted as you were, to let him escape!
B. Will. I pray thee, peace.
Shake. Green and I beheld him pass carelessly by within reach of your dagger. If you had held it but naked in your hand, he would have stabbed himself as he walked.
B. Will. I had not power to do it: a sudden damp came over me; I never felt so in my life. A kind of palsy seized me.
Shake. Palsy, when you're upon your duty! Go, go and sleep, or drink away your fears. You tremble still.
B. Will. I tremble! my courage was never yet called in question, villain. When I fought at Boulogne under the late king, both armies knew and feared me.
Shake. That might be, because they did not know you. Dog, I'll shake you off to your old trade of filching in a throng—Murder's too genteel a business for your capacity.—Sirrah, I have taken more gold at noon-day, than ever you filched copper by candle-light.
B. Will. Cowardly slave, you lye.

Shake. A coward! S'blood! that shall be proved. Come on.

B. Will. To thy heart's blood.

Shake. To thine. [*They fight.*

Enter Green.

Green. What, are you mad! For shame! put up your swords.

Shake. Not till I've had his life.

B. Will. Fool, guard thy own.

Green. Pray hear me, gentlemen!

B. Will. Stand farther off!

Shake. Away!

Green. This broil will ruin all.

Shake. He begun it.

B. Will. Ay, and will end it too.

Green. Arden, you know, returns, and will you let him
Escape a second time?

Shake. Who did the first?

Green. No matter, that may be repaired.

B. Will. Brand me with cowardice!

Green. Come, come, you're both to blame. Speak, will you lay aside this senseless broil?

B. Will. Nay, let him speak.

Shake. Why, rather than lose this opportunity— [*Puts up his sword.*

B. Will. Ay—We'll defer it, 'till Arden's dead. I'm for doing business first, and then for play.

Shake. Challenge me, when thou dar'st.

Green. The night draws on. Are you resolved?

Shake. We are.

Green. Enough.—See where he comes. I must withdraw;
But when you've done the deed, and sent his soul
No matter where—I'll come to you again.
[*Exit* Green.

B. Will. Something rises in my throat—I can scarce breathe—I'd rather poison half a dozen cardinals, than kill this honest man, but—I'll do't for my reputation.

Shake. He comes. Retire a little. Let him advance, then bury your dagger in his heart. If you fail, I'll second you.

B. Will. Stand further off, I shall not need your aid.

Shake. Now strike—

Enter Arden *first, and then Lord* Cheyney *attended.*

B. Will. Again prevented! Ten thousand devils take them all!

L. Chey. Arden, well met. You're to the isle of Shippey
Grown quite a stranger. Shall we see you there?

Ard. I purposed soon to have waited on your lordship.

L. Chey. Well, will you sup with me to-night at Shorlow?

Ard. Franklin, my lord, who is my guest at present,
Expects me at my house.

L. Chey. Then will you dine with me to-morrow?

Ard. I'll not fail your lordship.

L. Chey. Believe me, worthy friend, I'm glad to see you.
Walk you towards Feversham?

Ard. So please your lordship.

[*Exeunt Lord* Cheyney *and* Arden.

B. Will. Just as I'd taken aim too!—S'blood, I could kill myself for vexation.

Enter Green.

Green. Well, Arden is at last dispatched?

Shake. Yes, safe to Feversham.

Green. Safe, say you! his good fortune mocks us all.
These strange escapes have almost staggered me;
But thinking of my wrongs, I'm more confirmed.

B. Will. Well said, my man of resolution! A gentleman commits a murder with double the satisfaction for such a heart.—We must lay our snares more cunning for the future.

Green. We should consult with Michael, Arden's man:
The pigmy-hearted wretch, though long ago
He swore his master dead, acts with reluctance.

Shake. The coward must be spurred.—He does it, or he dies.

Green. I wonder at his absence, as he knew
Of this attempt, and promised to be here.

Enter Michael.

Mich. I saw my master and lord Cheyney pass,
And my heart leaped for joy. [*Apart.*

B. Will. What says the villain?

Mich. Would I were gone! [*Aside.*] Sir, if I give offence— [*Going.*

Green. Michael, come back; you must not leave us so.

Mich. What is your pleasure?

Green. Why, we understand
You are in love with Mosby's beauteous sister.

Mich. Suppose I am?

B. Will. You deal too mildly with the peasant. You swore to kill your master, villain. Be an honest man of your word, and do it then, white-liver!

Mich. Sir, I repented.

B. Will. Repented! what's that? Dog, know your rank, and act as we command, or your heart's blood——

Mich. What must I do? [*Frighted.*

B. Will. Do! you must shew us the house, appoint the time and place, and lure your master thither—We'll take care of him, without your trouble.

Green. So shall you purchase noble Mosby's friendship,
And, by his friendship, gain his sister's love.

Mich. They'll murder me too, should I not comply—— [*Aside.*

Green. Think on your love, your interest.

B. Will. Or your death.

Mich. To-night, soon as the abbey-clock strikes ten, [*Trembling.*
Come to his house: I'll leave the doors unbarred:

The left-hand stairs lead to my master's chamber;
There take him, and dispose him as you please.
Green. This cannot fail.
Shake. Unless this love-sick coward thinks to deceive us.
Mich. I will not, by Heaven!
B. Will. I believe thee; for by hell thou darest not. [*Exeunt.*
Mich. Master, thy constant love and daily bounty
Deserve more grateful offices from Michael.
[*Exit weeping.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in* ARDEN'S *House.*

ALICIA *alone.*

Alic. When vice has spread her poison through the soul,
How lifeless, slow, confused, and insincere
Are our resolves in the pursuit of virtue!
What wonder, then, Heaven should refuse its aid
To thoughts that only blossom for a time,
Look blooming to the eye, but yield no fruit?

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. I come, Alicia, to partake thy griefs;
For fire divided burns with lesser force.
Alic. I know thee: thou art come to fan the flame
Thy breath hath kindled here, till it consume us.
But tears and sighs shall stifle in my heart
The guilty passion.
Mos. Is heroic love,
That formed the bright examples of thy sex,
Made their lives glorious, and their fame immortal,
A crime in thee? Art thou not mine by oaths,
By mutual sufferings, by contract mine?
Alic. Why do you urge a rash, a fatal promise,
I had no right to make, or you to ask?
Why did you practise on my easy heart?
Why did I ever listen to your vows?
In me, 'twas foolish guilt and disobedience;
In you, 'twas avarice, insolence, and pride.
Mos. 'Twas love in me, and gratitude in you.
Alic. 'Twas insolence in you, meanness in me,
And madness in us both. My careful parents,
In scorn of your presumption and my weakness,
Gave me in marriage to a worthy gentleman,
Of birth and fortune equal to my own.
Three years I lived with him without reproach,
And made him in that time the happy father
Of two most lovely children. I too was happy;
At least I lived in hopes I might be so:
For time, and gratitude, and Arden's love,
I hoped might quench my guilty flame for you,
And make my heart a present worthy him.
Mos. And dost thou glory in thy perjuries?
In love, inconstancy alone's a crime.
Think on the ardour of our youthful passion;
Think how we played with love; nor thought it guilt,
Till thy first falsehood; call it not obedience!
Thy marriage with this Arden made me desperate;
Think on the transports of our love renewed,
And——
Alic. Hide the rest, lest listening winds should hear,
And publish to the world our shameful tale!
Here let remembrance of our follies die.
Mos. Shall our loves wither in their early bloom?
Alic. Their harvest else will be to both our shames.
Hast thou not made a monster of me, Mosby?
You should abhor me, I abhor myself.
When unperceived I stole on Arden's sleep,
(Hell steeled my heart, and death was in my hand,)
Pale anguish brooded on his ashy cheek,
And chilly sweats stood shivering on his brow.
Relentless murder, at a sight so sad,
Gave place to pity; and as he waked, I stood
Irresolute, and drowned in tears.
Mos. She's lost,
And I in vain have stained my soul with blood.
[*Aside.*
Alic. Give o'er in time; in vain are your attempts
Upon my Arden's life; for Heaven, that wrested
The fatal weapon from my trembling hand,
Still has him in its charge.
Mos. Little she thinks, [*Aside.*
That Arden's dead ere now.—It must be so;
I've but that game to play, ere it be known.
Alic. I know our dangerous state; I hesitate
I tremble for your life; I dread reproach;
But we've offended, and must learn to suffer.
Mos. Then Arden lives, in his Alicia blest,
And Mosby wretched! Yet should chance or nature
Lay Arden gently in a peaceful grave,
Might I presume to hope? Alicia, speak.
Alic. How shall I look into my secret thoughts,
And answer what I fear to ask myself?
[*A long pause.*
Mos. Silence speaks best for me. His death once known,
I must forswear the fact, and give these tools
To public justice, and not live in fear.— [*Aside.*
Thy heart is mine. I ask but for my own.
[*To her.*
Truth, gratitude, and honour bind you to me,
Or else you never loved.
Alic. Then why this struggle?
Not loved! O had my love been justly placed,
As sure it was exalted and sincere,
I should have gloried in it, and been happy.
But I'll no longer live the abject slave
Of loose desire; I disclaim the thought.
Mos. I'll ask no more what honour should deny;
By Heaven, I never will.
Alic. Well then remember,
On that condition only, I renew
My vows. If time and the event of things
[*Giving her hand.*

Should ever make it lawful, I'll be yours.
Mos. Oh my full joys!——
Alic. Suppress thy frantic transports!
My heart recoils; I am betrayed! O give me back
My promised faith!
Mos. First, let the world dissolve.
Alic. There is no joy nor peace for you or me:
All our engagements cannot but be fatal.
Mos. The time may come, when you'll have other thoughts;
'Till then, farewell.—[*Aside.*] Now, fortune, do thy worst! [*Exit.*
Alic. Mosby, return!——He's gone, and I am wretched.
I should have banished him my sight for ever.
Ye happy fair ones, whose untainted fame
Has never yet been blasted with reproach,
Fly from the appearance of dishonour far.
Virtue is arbitrary, nor admits debate:
To doubt is treason in her rigid court;
But, if ye parley with the foe, you're lost. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Another Room in* ARDEN'S *House.*

ARDEN *and* FRANKLIN *sitting together on a couch:* ARDEN *thoughtful.*

Frank. Nay, wonder not. Though every circumstance
Thus strangely met to prove the lady false,
And justify the husband's horrid vengeance,
Yet it appears to every honest eye,
Too late for the poor lady, she was wronged.
Ard. Is it possible?
Frank. Ay, very possible:
He lives, that proves it so. Concealed from justice,
He pines with ceaseless sorrow for his guilt,
And each hour bends him lower towards his grave.
Ard. I know thy friendship, and perceive its drift.
I'll bear my wrongs, for sure I have been wronged.
Do I but think so then! What fools are men,
Whom love and hatred, anger, hope, and fear,
And all the various passions, rule by turns,
And in their several turns alike deceive?
Frank. To cast away, and on suspicion only,
A jewel, like Alicia, were to her
Unjust, and cruel to yourself. [*Clock strikes ten.*] Good night,
The clock has strucken ten.
Ard. I thought it more.
Frank. I thought it not so much.
Ard. Why, thus it is:
Our happy hours are few, and fly so swift,
That they are past ere we begin to count them:
But, when with pain and misery opprest,
Anticipating Time's unvarying pace,
We think each heavy moment is an age.
Frank. Come, let us to rest. Impartial as the grave,
Sleep robs the cruel tyrant of his power,
Gives rest and freedom to the o'erwrought slave,
And steals the wretched beggar from his wants.
Droop not, my friend; sleep will suspend thy cares,
And time will end them.
Ard. True, for time brings death,
The only certain end of human woes.
Sleep interrupts, but, waking, we're restored
To all our griefs again. Watching and rest,
Alternately succeeding one another,
Are all the idle business of dull life.
What shall we call this undetermined state,
This narrow isthmus 'twixt two boundless oceans,
That, whence we came, and that, to which we tend?
Is it life chequered with the sleep of death?
Or death enlivened by our waking dreams?
But we'll to bed.—Here, Michael, bring the lights!

Enter MICHAEL *with lights.*

Heaven send you good repose.
[*Gives* FRANKLIN *a candle.*
Frank. The like to you.
Mich. Shall I attend you, sir?
Frank. No, no, I choose to be alone. Good night.
[*Exit* FRANKLIN. MICHAEL *attends his master with the other light, and returns.*
Mich. I, who should take my weapon in my hand,
And guard his life with hazard of my own,
With fraudful smiles have led him, unsuspecting,
Quite to the jaws of death. But I've an oath:
Mosby has bound me with an horrid vow,
Which if I break, these dogs have sworn my death.
I've left the doors unbarred. Hark! 'twas the latch.
They come—I hear their oaths, and see their daggers
Insulting o'er my master's mangled body,
While he for mercy pleads.—Good master, live!
I'll bar the doors again. But should I meet them—
What's that?—I heard them cry, 'Where is this coward?'
Arden once dead, they'll murder me for sport.
Help—call the neighbours—Master—Franklin—help!

Enter ARDEN *and* FRANKLIN, *undressed, at several doors.*

Ard. What dismal outcry's this?
Frank. What frights thee, Michael?
Mich. My master!—Franklin!
Ard. Why dost thou tremble so?
Mich. I dreamed the house was full of thieves and murderers. [*Trembling.*
Ard. Dreamed! what, awake! Are all the doors made fast?
Mich. I think they are.
Ard. I'll go and see myself. [*Exit* ARDEN.
Frank. You made a fearful noise.
Mich. Did I?——
Ard. [*Within.*] Why, Michael!

Frank. You tremble still.—Has any one been here?
Mich. No, I hope not. My master will be angry.

Enter ARDEN.

Ard. This negligence not half contents me, sir:
The doors were all left open.
Mich. Sir—
Ard. To bed,
And, as you prize my favour, be more careful.
[*Exit* MICHAEL.

Frank. 'Tis very cold. Once more, my friend—
Ard. Good night. [*Exit* ARDEN.

SCENE IV.—*Changes to the Street before* ARDEN'S *Door; the Door shut.*

Enter BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG.

B. Will. Zounds! Michael has betrayed us;
The doors are fast. Away, away—Disperse.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An Inn, the Flower-de-Luce.*

MOSBY *and* MICHAEL.

Mich. Though I with oaths appealed to conscious Heaven,
That Arden rose, and shut the doors himself,
Yet, but for Green, these bloody rogues had killed me.
We must desist— Franklin and sweet Maria
Have promised, at Alicia's own request,
To interfere.
Mos. Such ever be the employ
Of him I hate!
Mich. The mourning fair, all changed,
By me conjures you (and with tears she spake it,)
Not to involve yourself and her in ruin,
By seeking to renew a correspondence
She has renounced for ever.
Mos. How! confusion!
Mich. And hopes, as Heaven, in answer to her prayers,
Hath reconciled her duty and affection,
You will approve her resolution—
Mos. Doubtless!
Mich. And learn, by her example, to subdue
Your guilty passion.
Mos. Ha, ha, ha! exquisite woman!
So! rather than not change, she'll love her husband!
But she will not persevere.
Mich. Yes, sure she will.
Mos. Have I, then, slighted her whole sighing sex,
Bid opportunity and fortune wait,
And all to be forsaken for a husband!
By Heaven, I'm glad he has so oft escaped,
That I may have him murdered in her sight!

Enter GREEN.

Green. How strange a providence attends this man!
'Tis vain to strive with Heaven.—Let's give it o'er.
Mos. No; when I do, may I be curst for ever,
Hopeless to love, and hate without revenge!
May I ne'er know an end of disappointment,
But, prest with hard necessity, like thee,
Live the contempt of my insulting foe!
Green. I scorn the abject thought. Had he a life
Hung on each hair, he dies!—If we succeed,
[*To* MICHAEL.
This very night Maria shall be thine.
Mich. I am a man again.
Mos. I've thought a way,
That may be easy under friendship's mask,
Which to a foe suspected may be hard.
Green. Friendship! impossible.
Mos. You know him not.
You, with your ruffians, in the street shall seek him.
I follow at some distance. They begin
(No matter how) a quarrel, and at once
Assault him with their swords.—Straight I appear,
Forget all wrongs, and draw in his defence;
Mark me, be sure, with some slight wound; then fly,
And leave the rest to me.
Mich. I know his temper.
This seeming benefit will cancel all
His former doubts, and gain his easy heart.
Green. Perhaps so—yet——
Mos. Further debates are needless. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in* ARDEN'S *House.*

Enter FRANKLIN *and* MARIA.

Frank. Well, in what temper did you find Alicia?
Mar. Never was anguish, never grief, like hers:
She eats, nor sleeps. Her lovely downcast eyes,
That used to gladden each beholder's heart,
Now wash the flinty bosom of the earth.
Her troubled breast heaves with incessant sighs,
Which drink the purple streams of life, and blast
Her bloom, as storms the blossoms of the spring.
But sure her prayers must quickly reach high Heaven,
Relenting Arden kindly soothe her sorrows,
And her lost peace restore.
Frank. Their mutual peace, Maria!
For his can ne'er be found but in Alicia.
Ashamed to view the face of man or day,
As Mosby's name was written on his brow,

He cheerless wanders; seeks the darkest gloom,
To hide his drooping head, and grieves alone.
With a full heart, swoln eyes, and faultering tongue,
He sometimes, seeking to beguile his grief,
Begins a mournful tale: But straight a thought
Of his imagined wrongs, crossing his memory,
Ends his sad story, ere the half be told.
O may our pains with wished success be crowned!

Enter ARDEN.

Ard. No, Franklin, no; your friendly cares are vain:
Were I but certain she had wronged my bed,
I then might hate her, and shake off my woes;
But thus perplexed, can never taste of comfort!
Frank. O Jealousy! thou bane of social joys!
Oh! she's a monster, made of contradictions!
Let Truth, in all her native charms, appear,
And, with the voice of harmony itself,
Plead the just cause of innocence traduced;
Deaf as the adder, blind as upstart greatness,
She sees nor hears! and yet let Slander whisper,
Or evil-eyed Suspicion look oblique,
Rumour has fewer tongues than she has ears;
And Argus' hundred eyes are dim and slow,
To piercing Jealousy's!—
Ard. No more, no more:
I know its plagues; but where's the remedy?
Mar. In your Alicia.
Frank. She shall heal these wounds.
Ard. She's my disease, and can she be my cure?
My friends should rather teach me to abhor her,
To tear her image from my bleeding heart!
Mar. We leave that hateful office to the fiends.
Frank. If you e'er loved, you'll not refuse to see her:
You promised that.
Ard. Did I?
Frank. Indeed you did.
Ard. Well, then, some other time.
Frank. No; see her now.
Ard. Franklin, I know my heart, and dare not see her.
I have a husband's honour to maintain,
I fear the lover's weakness may betray.
Let me not do what honour must condemn,
And friendship blush to hear.
Frank. That Arden never will.
Mar. Did you but know her grief——
Ard. Am I the cause?
Have I, just Heaven! have I e'er injured her?
Yet I'm the coward. O preposterous fear!
See where she comes! Armed with my numerous wrongs,
I'll meet, with honourable confidence,
The offending wife, and look the honest husband.
Frank. Maria, we'll withdraw: even friendship here
Would seem impertinence.
[*Exeunt* FRANKLIN *and* MARIA.
Ard. Be still, my heart!

ALICIA *enters, not seeing* ARDEN.

Alic. How shall I bear my Arden's just reproaches!
Or can a reconcilement long continue
That's founded on deceit? Can I avow
My secret guilt!—No; at so mean a thought
Abandoned Infamy herself would blush.
Nay, could I live with public loss of honour,
Arden would die to see Alicia scorned.
He's here! earth open! hide me from his sight!
Ard. Guilt chains her tongue! Lo! silent, self-condemned,
With tearful eyes, and trembling limbs, she stands.
Alic. Fain would I kiss his footsteps; but that look,
Where indignation seems to strive with grief,
Forbids me to approach him.
Ard. Who would think
That anguish were not real?
Alic. I'm rooted here!
Ard. Those tears, methinks, even if her guilt were certain,
Might wash away her pains.
Alic. Support me, Heaven!
Ard. Curse on the abject thought! I shall relapse
To simple dotage. She steals on my heart,
She conquers with her eyes. If I but hear her voice,
Nor earth, nor Heaven, can save me from her snares!
O! let me fly—if I have yet the power.
Alic. O Arden! do not, do not leave me thus! [*Kneels, and holds him.*
Ard. I pray thee, loose thy hold!
Alic. O never, never!
Ard. Why should I stay to tell thee of my wrongs,
To aggravate thy guilt, and wound thy soul?
Thyself, if all these agonizing struggles,
Of tears, of sighs, of groans, of speechless sorrow,
Be but sincere—thyself will do it better.
One thing I'll tell thee—for perhaps 'twill please thee,—
Thou'st broke my heart, Alicia.
Alic. Oh! [*She falls to the ground.*
Ard. And canst thou,
Can woman pity, whom she hath undone?
Why dost thou grasp my knees? what wouldst thou say,
If thou couldst find thy speech!
Alic. O! mercy, mercy!
Ard. Thou hast had none on me; let go my hand!
Why dost thou press it to thy throbbing heart,
That beats—but not for me?
Alic. Then may it ne'er beat more!
Ard. At least, I'm sure it did not always so.
Alic. For that my soul is pierced with deep remorse,
For that I bow me to the dust before thee,
And die to be forgiven! O Arden! Arden!

Ard. Presumptuous fool! what business hast thou here?
Did I not know my weakness, and her pow'r!—
Rise, rise, Alicia.
Alic. No; here let me lie,
On the bare bosom of this conscious earth,
Till Arden speak the words of peace and comfort,
Or my heart break before him!
Ard. O Alicia,
Thou inconsistent spring of grief and joy,
Whence bitter streams, and sweet, alternate flow,
Come to my arms, and in this too fond bosom
Disburden all the fulness of thy soul!
Alic. Let me approach, with awe, that sacred temple,
Resume my seat, and dwell for ever there!
Ard. There ever reign, as on thy native throne,
Thou lovely wanderer!
Alic. Am I at last,
In error's fatal mazes long bewildered,
Permitted here to find my peace and safety!
Ard. Dry up thy tears; and tell me, truly tell me,
Has my long-suffering love at length prevailed,
And art thou mine indeed?
Alic. Heaven is my witness,
I love thee, Arden; and esteem thy love
Above all earthly good. Thy kind forgiveness
Speaks to my soul that peaceful calm confirmed,
Which reason and reflection had begun.
Ard. Thou'rt cheaply purchased with unnumber'd sighs,
With many a bitter tear, and years of patience,
Thou treasure of more worth than mines of gold!
I will not doubt my happiness. Thou art,
Thou wilt be mine, ever, and only mine.
Alic. I am, I will. I ne'er knew joy till now.
Ard. This is our truest, happiest, nuptial day.
To-night, thou know'st, according to my custom,
Our yearly fair returning with St Valentine,
I treat my friends. I go to countenance
Their honest mirth, and cheer them with my bounty.
'Till happy night, farewell! My best Alicia,
How will our friends rejoice, our foes repine,
To see us thus! [*Exit.*
Alic. Thus ever may they see us!
The wandering fires, that have so long misled me,
Are now extinguished, and my heart is Arden's.
The flow'ry path of innocence and peace
Shines bright before, and I shall stray no longer.
Whence then these sighs, and why these floods of tears?
Sighs are the language of a broken heart,
And tears the tribute each enlightened eye
Pays, and must pay, for vice and folly past.
And yet the painfullest virtue hath its pleasure:
Though dangers rise, yet, peace restored within,
My soul collected shall undaunted meet them.
Though trouble, grief, and death, the lot of all,
On good and bad without distinction fall,
The soul, which conscious innocence sustains,
Supports with ease these temporary pains;
But stung with guilt, and loaded with despair,
Becomes itself a burden none can bear. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Street. People at a Distance, as at a Fair.*

Enter ARDEN *on one side, and* BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG *on the other,* GREEN *directing them.*

B. Will. Shakebag, you'll second me—S'blood, give the way. [*Jostles* ARDEN.
Shake. May we not pass the streets?
Ard. I saw you not.
B. Will. Your sight perhaps is bad; your feeling may be better. [*Strikes him.*
Ard. Insolent villain! [*Draws.*
B. Will. Come, we'll teach you manners.
Ard. Both at once! barbarous cowards!

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. O bloody dogs! attempt a life so precious!
B. Will. This is a fury, George.
[BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG *beaten off.*
Shake. I've pinked him though——
Ard. Villains, come back, and finish your design!
Mos. Shall I pursue them, sir?
Ard. Not for the world——
Mosby! amazing generosity!
Mos. I hope you are not hurt.
Ard. Pierc'd to the heart——
Mos. Forbid it, heaven! quick, let me fly for help.
Ard. With sharp reflection: Mosby, I can't bear
To be so far obliged to one I've wronged.
Mos. Who would not venture life to save a friend?
Ard. From you I've not deserved that tender name.
Mos. No more of that—would I were worthy of it!
Ard. I own my heart, by boiling passions torn,
Forgets its gentleness—yet is ever open
To melting gratitude. O say what price
Can buy your friendship?
Mos. Only think me yours.
Ard. Easy, indeed! I am too much obliged.
Why recked not your good sword its justice on me,
When, mad with jealous rage, in my own house,
I urged you to my ruin?
Mos. I loved you then
With the same warmth as now.
Ard. What's here! you bleed.
Let me bind up your wound.
Mos. A trifle, sir——
Ard. Your friendship makes it so.—See, Franklin, see

Enter FRANKLIN.

The man I treated as a coward, bleeding,
Wretch that I am! for his defence of me.

Look to your wound; and, Mosby, let us hope
You'll sup with me. There will be honest Bradshaw,
And Franklin here, and——
Mos. Sir, I will not fail.
Frank. I shall not come.
Ard. Nay, Franklin, that's unkind.
Prithee——
Frank. Nay, urge me not. I have my reasons.
Mos. Avoids my company! So much the better.
His may not be so proper. [*Aside.*] An hour hence,
If you are not engaged, we'll meet at Fowl's.
Ard. I will be there.
Mos. 'Till then I take my leave. [*Exit* MOS.
Ard. How have I been mistaken in this man!
Frank. How are you sure you're not mistaken now?
Ard. No doubt he loves me; and I blush to think
How I've suspected him, and wronged Alicia.
Frank. May you be ever happy in your wife;
But——
Ard. Speak—But what? Let's have no riddles here.
Can she be innocent, and Mosby guilty?
Frank. To speak my thoughts, this new officious fondness
Makes me suspect: I like him worse than ever.
Ard. Because I like him better? What a churl!
Frank. You are credulous, and treat my serious doubts
With too much levity. You vex me, Arden.
[*Exit.*
Ard. Believe me, friend, you'll laugh at this hereafter. [*Exit the other way.*

MOSBY, *having watched* FRANKLIN *out, re-enters with* GREEN.

Mos. The surly friend has left him—As I wished—
You see how eagerly the foolish fowl
Flies headlong to our snare: now to inclose him.
At eight the guests are bidden to his banquet,
And only Michael, of his numerous train,
Keeps home with his Alicia. He'll secure
The keys of all the doors, and let you in
With my two trusty bloodhounds. Alicia seems
Averse at present.
Green. She'll not dare betray us.
Mos. Not when the deed is done; we know too much.
She'll be our prisoner, and shall be observed.
Towards evening, then, upon a slight pretence
To pass an hour at draughts, (a game he loves)
I'll draw this husband home. You'll be prepared
In the inner room, (Michael will shew it you)
'Till, at a signal given, you all rush forth,
And strangle him.
Green. Good—'tis a death, that leaves
No bloody character to mark the place.
Mos. However, come all provided with your daggers.
Do you seek Michael, I'll instruct the rest.
Green. What shall the signal be?
Mos. These words in the game,
'I take you now.'
Green. Arden! thou'rt taken now indeed.
Mos. His body, thrown behind the abbey-wall,
Shall be descried by the early passenger,
Returning from the fair. My friend, thy hand;
[*Shakes it.*
Be firm, and our united strength
With ease shall cast dead Arden to the earth.
Green. Thanks to his foolish tenderness of soul!
Mos. True; he, who trusts an old inveterate foe,
Bares his own breast, and courts the fatal blow.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—ARDEN'S *House.*

ALICIA *alone.*

What have I heard! Is this the house of Arden!
O! that the power, which has so often saved him,
Would send his guardian angel now,
To whisper in his ear his present danger!
Fly, Arden, fly! avoid this fatal roof,
Where murder lurks, and certain death awaits thee!
Wander——no matter where——Turn but from hence,
Thou canst not miss thy way—The house is theirs.
I am suspected—Michael guards the door—
And even Maria's absent. Bloody Mosby,
These are the fruits of thy detested lust.
But hark! the fiends approach. Green had humanity.

Enter GREEN, BLACK WILL, SHAKEBAG, *and* MICHAEL.

Could I prevail on him! O sir—
[*Talks apart with* GREEN.
B. Will. What a fair house! rich furniture! what piles of massy plate! And then yon iron chest! Good plunder, comrade.
Shake. And madam Arden there—A prize worth them all to me.
B. Will. And shall that fawning, white-liver'd coward, Mosby, enjoy all these?
Shake. No doubt he would, were we the fools he thinks us.
Green. Had he as many lives as drops of blood,
I'd have them all. [*To* ALICIA
Alic. But for one single night——
Green. I'd not defer his fate a single hour,

Though I were sure myself to die the next.
So, peace, irresolute woman—and be thankful
For thy own life.
Alic. O mercy, mercy!
Green. Yes,
Such mercy as the nursing lioness,
When drained of moisture by her eager young,
Shews to the prey that first encounters her.
B. Will. Who talks of mercy, when I am here?
Green. She would prevent us; but our steady courage
Laughs at her coward arts.
[*Knocking gently at the gate.*
Why, Michael!
Mich. Sir!
Green. Thou bloodless coward, what dost tremble at?
Dost thou not hear a knocking at the gate?
[*Exit* MICHAEL.
Mosby, no doubt. How like a sly adulterer,
Who steals at midnight, and with caution gives
The appointed signal to his neighbour's wife!
B. Will. Which is the place, where we're to be concealed?
Green. This inner room.
B. Will. 'Tis well. The word is, 'Now I take you.' [*Knocking louder than before.*
Green. Ay, there's authority. That speaks the master.
He seems in haste; 'twere pity he should wait,
Now we're so well prepar'd for his reception.
[GREEN, BLACK WILL, *and* SHAKEBAG, *go into the inner room.*
Alic. Now, whither are they gone! The door's unbarred.
I hear the sound of feet. Should it be Arden,
And Mosby with him—I can't bear the doubt,
Nor would I be resolv'd. Be hush'd, my fears!
'Tis Mosby, and alone. [*Enter* MOSBY.] Sir, hear me, Mosby!
Mos. Madam, is this a time?
Alic. I will be heard,
And mark me, when I swear, never hereafter,
By look, word, act——
Mos. Be damned—your husband—
Alic. Ha! [*She screams.*

Enter ARDEN *and* MICHAEL.

Ard. Am I a monster that I fright thee thus?
[*To* MICHAEL.
Say, what has happened since I left the house?
Thou look'st, Alicia, as if wild amazement
Had changed thee to the image of herself.
Alic. Is Franklin with you?
Ard. No.
Alic. Nor Fowl, nor Bradshaw?
Ard. Neither, but both expected.
Alic. Merciful Heaven!
Ard. I meant to dedicate this happy night
To mirth and joy, and thy returning love.
[*She sighs.*
Make me not sad, Alicia: For my sake
Let discontent be banished from your brow,
And welcome Arden's friends with laughing eyes.
Amongst the first let Mosby be enrolled—
Alic. The villain! [*Aside*
Ard. Nay, I am too well convinced
Of Mosby's friendship, and Alicia's love,
Ever to wrong them more by weak suspicions;
I've been indeed to blame, but I will make thee
A large amends, Alicia. Look upon him,
As on the man, that gave your husband life.
Alic. Would take my husband's life!—I'll tell him all,
And cast this load of horror from my soul:
Yet, 'tis a dreadful hazard. Both must die.
A fearful thought! Franklin may come, or Bradshaw—
O let me not precipitate his fate! [*Aside.*
Mos. I see my presence is offensive there.
[*Going.*
Ard. Alicia! No—she has no will but mine.
Mos. It is not fit she should: and yet—perhaps—
'Twere better, sir—Permit me to retire.
Ard. No more——Our friendship, publicly avowed,
Will clear her injured virtue to the world.
Mos. Something there is in that—
Ard. It is a debt
I owe to both your fames, and pay it freely.
Mos. For her sake, then; not for my own.
Alic. [*Aside.*] O damned dissembler!
Ard. Come, take your seat; this shall not save your money.
Bring us the tables, Michael. [*They sit and play.*
Alic. [*Aside.*] O just Heaven!
Wilt thou not interpose?—How dread this pause,
When thousand terrors crowd the narrow space!
Ard. Your thoughts are absent, Mosby.
B. Will. Blood! why don't Mosby give the word? [*Aside.*
Mich. Give back, the game's against him.
Alic. Fly, Franklin! fly, to save thy Arden's life.
Murder herself, that chases him in view,
Beholding me, starts back, and, for a moment,
Suspends her thirst of blood. [*Aside.*
Ard. Come, give it up; I told you I should win. [*Rises.*
Mos. No, I see an advantage; move again.
Ard. There.
Mos. 'Now I take you.'
[BLACK WILL *throws a scarf over* ARDEN'S *head, in order to strangle him; but* ARDEN *disengages himself, wrests a dagger from* SHAKEBAG, *and stands on his defence, till* MOSBY *getting behind, and seizing his arm, the rest assassinate him.*
Alic. O Power omnipotent! make strong his arm!
Give him to conquer! Ha! my prayers are curses,
And draw down vengeance where they meant a blessing.
Ard. Inhospitable villain!
Alic. O! he dies!
Ard. O hold your bloody—Mosby too! Nay, then, [*Falling.*
I yield me to my fate. Is this, Alicia,
This the return for my unequalled love?

Alic. Or death, or madness, would be mercies now,
Therefore beyond my hopes.
Ard. O Mosby, Michael, Green!
Why have you drawn my blood upon your souls?
Mos. Behold her there, to whom I was betrothed,
And ask no further.
Green. Think on thy abbey-lands
From injured Green.
Ard. You now are your own judges,
But we shall meet again, where right and truth—
Who—who are these? But I forgive you all.
Thy hand, Alicia.
Alic. I'll not give it thee.
Ard. O wretched woman! have they killed thee, too?
A deadly paleness, agony, and horror,
On thy sad visage sit. My soul hangs on thee,
And, though departing—just departing—loves thee;
Is loth to leave, unreconciled to thee,
This useless mangled tenement of clay.
Dismiss her pleased, and say thou'rt innocent.
Alic. All hell contains not such a guilty wretch.
Ard. Then welcome death, though in the shape of murder!
How have I doated to idolatry!
Vain, foolish wretch, and thoughtless of hereafter,
Nor hoped, nor wished a heaven beyond her love.
Now, unprepared, I perish by her hate.
Alic. Though blacker, and more guilty, than the fiends,
My soul is white from this accursed deed.
O Arden! hear me—
Ard. Full of doubts, I come,
O thou Supreme, to seek thy awful presence.
My soul is on the wing. I own thy justice;
Prevent me with thy mercy. [*Dies.*
Alic. Turn not from me:
Behold me, pity me, survey my sorrows!
I, who despised the duty of a wife,
Will be thy slave. Spit on me, spurn me, sir,
I'll love thee still. O couldst thou court my scorn,
And now abhor me, when I love thee more,
If possible, than e'er thou lov'd'st Alicia!
Mos. Mad fool, he's dead, and hears thee not.
Alic. 'Tis false——
He smiles upon me, and applauds my vengeance.
[*Snatches a dagger, and strikes at* MOSBY.
A knocking at the gate.
Mos. Damnation!
B. Will. 'Sdeath! we shall leave our work unfinished, and be betrayed at last. Let us hide the body.
Mos. Force her away.
Alic. Inhuman bloody villains!
[*She swoons, as she is forced from the body.*

Enter MARIA.

Mar. Mosby here!
My sliding feet, as they move trembling forwards,
Are drenched in blood. O may I only fancy
That Arden there lies murdered!——
Mos. How fares Alicia?
Alic. As the howling damned, and thou my hell.—
Mar. Unhappy brother!
If thou hast done this deed, hope not to escape:
Mercy herself, who only seeks for crimes,
That she may pardon and reform the guilty,
Would change her nature at a sight like this.

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. The guests are come—the servants all returned.
Mos. Alicia, be thyself; and mask thy heart
[MOSBY *lifts up* ALICIA.
From every prying eye with courteous smiles.
Alic. Thou canst not think me mean enough to live?
Mos. You would not chuse an ignominious death?
Alic. That's all I dread—Might but the silent grave,
When it receives me to its dark abode,
Hide, with my dust, my shame!—O might that be,
And Arden's death revenged! 'tis my sole prayer;
If not, may awful justice have her course!
[*Exit* ALICIA.
Mos. Sister! our lives are thine—
Mar. Though Mosby has shook off humanity,
I cannot be his accuser. [*Exit* MARIA.
Mos. Follow them, Green, and watch Alicia's conduct.
Green. I will, but cannot answer for my own.
O Arden! Arden! could we change conditions!
[*Exit* GREEN.
B. Will. Why, what a crew of cowards!
In the same moment murdering and repenting.
Mos. Give me the ring, that is on Arden's finger.
Shake. There. Will you have his purse too?
Mos. No, keep that.
B. Will. Thanks for our own: we should have kept the ring,
Were it not too remarkable.
But how must we dispose of the body?
Mos. Convey it through the garden, to the field
Behind the abbey-wall: Michael will shew the way.
The night is dark and cloudy—Yet, take heed,
The house is full of company.
B. Will. Sir, if you doubt our conduct, do it yourself.
Mos. Nay, gentlemen—
Shake. Pretend to direct us!
Mos. For your own sakes—Arden will soon be mist.
Shake. We know our business, sir.
Mos. I doubt it not.
There's your reward. The horses both are saddled,
And ready for your flight.
B. Will. Use them yourself:
I hope we're as safe as you.
Mos. Why, gentlemen—Arden! I used thee worse. [*Aside.*

B. Will. We shall take care, however, for our own sakes.
Mos. 'Tis very well—I hope we all are friends.
So—softly—softly—Michael, not that door—
[MICHAEL *going out at the wrong door.*
So—make what speed you can: I'll wait you there. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall in* ARDEN'S *House.*

Enter MOSBY.

They must pass undescried: gardens and fields
Are dreary deserts now. Night-fowls and beasts of prey
Avoid the pinching rigour of the season,
Nor leave their shelter at a time like this.
And yet this night, this lingering winter night,
Hung with a weight of clouds, that stops her course,
Contracts new horrors, and a deeper black,
From this damned deed.—Mosby, thou hast thy wish;
Arden is dead; now count thy gains at leisure.
Dangers without, on every side suspicion;
Within, my starting conscience marks such wounds,
As hell can equal, only murderers feel. [*A pause.*
This, this the end of all my flattering hopes!
O! happiest was I in my humble state:
Though I lay down in want, I slept in peace;
My daily toil begat my night's repose;
My night's repose made day-light pleasing to me.
But now I've climbed the top-bough of the tree,
And sought to build my nest among the clouds:
The gentlest gales of summer shake my bed,
And dreams of murder harrow up my soul.
But hark!—Not yet:—'Tis dreadful being alone.
This awful silence, that, unbroken, reigns
Through earth and air, awakes attention more,
Than thunder bursting from ten thousand clouds:
S'death!—'tis but Michael—Say—

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. Dead Arden lies
Behind the abbey—'tis a dismal sight!
It snowed apace while we disposed the body.
Mos. And not as you returned?
Mich. No, sir—
Mos. That's much—
Should you be questioned as to Arden's death,
You'll not confess?
Mich. No, so Maria's mine.
Mos. She's thine, if all a brother can—
Mich.——What's if?
I bought her dear, at hazard of my soul,
And force shall make her mine.—
Mos.——Why, how now, coward!

Enter MARIA.

Mar. The guests refuse to take their seats without you;
Alicia's grief too borders on distraction.
Thy presence may appease—
Mos. Increase it rather.
Mar. Michael, your absence too has been observed.
Mos. Say we are coming. [*Exit* MARIA.
Mich. One thing I'd forgot. [*Returning.*
Soon as the company have left the house,
The ruffians will return.
Mos. What would the villains?
Mich. They muttered threats and curses,
And seemed not satisfied with their reward.
[*Exit* MICHAEL.
Mos. Let them take all. Ambition, avarice, lust,
That drove me on to murder, now forsake me.
Oh Arden! if thy discontented ghost
Still hovers here to see thy blood revenged,
View, view the anguish of this guilty breast,
And be appeased! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in* ARDEN'S *House. A Table spread for Supper.*

GREEN, BRADSHAW, ADAM FOWL, ALICIA, MARIA, *&c.*

Brad. Madam, be comforted.
A. Fowl. Some accident, or business unforeseen, detains him thus.
Brad. I doubt not of his safety.
Alic. I thank you, gentlemen; I know you loved
My Arden well, and kindly speak your wishes.

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. I am ashamed I've made you wait: be seated.
Green. Madam, first take your place.
Alic. Make me not mad—
To me henceforth all places are alike. [*Sits.*
Mos. Come, since we want the master of the house,
I'll take his seat for once.
Alic. Dares he do this? [*Aside.*
Mos. I'm much afflicted, that he stays so late;
The times are perilous.
Green. And he has enemies.
Though no man, sure, did e'er deserve them less.
Mos. This day he was assaulted in the street.
Green. You saved him then.
Mos. Would I were with him now!
Mar. She starts, her looks are wild. [*Aside.*
How fare you, madam?
Alic. I'm lost in admiration of your brother.
Mar. I fear her more than ever. [*Aside.*]—
Madam, be merry.
Mos. Michael, some wine. Health and long life to Arden! [*Rising.*
Alic. The good you wish, and have procured for Arden, [*Rising.*
Light on thyself!
Mar. For Heaven's sake!—
Alic. Give me way. [*Comes forward.*
Let them dispatch, and send me to my husband:
[*All rise.*
I've lived too long with falsehood and deceit.
[*Knocking at the gate.*
A. Fowl. What noise is that? [*Exit* MICHAEL.
Brad. Pray Heaven, that all be right!
Mos. Bar all the doors.

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. We are discovered, sir! [*To* MOSBY.
The mayor with officers, and men in arms.

Enter Mayor, &c.

Mayor. Go you with these, and do as I directed. [*Exeunt officers and others.*
I'm sorry that the duty of my office
Demands a visit so unseasonable.
Mos. Your worship doubtless were a welcome guest
At any hour; but wherefore thus attended?
Mayor. I have received a warrant from the council,
To apprehend two most notorious ruffians;
And information being made, on oath,
That they were seen to enter here to-night,
I'm come to search.
Green. I'm glad it is no worse. [*Aside.*
Mos. And can you think, that Arden entertains
Villains like those you speak of? Were he here,
You'd not be thanked for this officiousness.
Mayor. I know my duty, sir, and that respect,
So justly due to our good neighbour's worth.—
But where is Arden?
Alic. Heavens! where indeed!
Mar. Alicia, for my sake—— [*Aside.*
Alic. If I were silent,
Each precious drop of murdered Arden's blood
Would find a tongue, and cry to Heaven for vengeance!
Mayor. What says the lady?
Mos. Oh! sir, heed her not;
Her husband has not been at home to-night,
And her misboding sorrow for his absence
Has almost made her frantic.
Mayor. Scarce an hour
Since I beheld him enter here with you!
Mos. The darkness of the night deceived you, sir;
It was a stranger, since departed hence.
Mayor. That's most surprising! No man knows him better.
Frank. [*Without.*] Within there—ho—bar up your gates with care,
And set a watch. Let not a man go by——

FRANKLIN, *and others, enter with lights.*

And every tongue, that gave not its consent
To Arden's death, join mine, and cry aloud
To Heaven and earth for justice. Honest Arden,
My friend, is murdered!
Mayor. Murdered!
Green. How?
Mos. By whom?
Frank. How shall I utter what my eyes have seen!
Horrid, with many a gaping wound, he lies
Behind the abbey, a sad spectacle.
O vengeance! vengeance.
Mayor. Justly art thou moved.
Passion is reason in a cause like this.
Frank. Eternal Providence, to whose bright eye
Darkness itself is as the noon-day blaze,
Who brings the midnight murderer, and his deeds,
To light and shame, has, in his own security,
Found these.
Mayor. Here seize them all—this instant:
[ALICIA *faints, and is carried off.*
Look to the lady; this may be but feigned.
Your charge but goes along with my suspicions.
Brad. And mine.
A. Fowl. And mine.
Frank. First hear me, and then judge,
Whether, on slight presumptions, I accuse them.
These honest men (neighbours and townsmen all)
Conducted me, dropping with grief and fear,
To where the body lay: with them I took these notes,
Not to be trusted to the faithless memory.

'*Huge clots of blood, and some of Arden's hair,*
'*May still be seen upon the garden-wall;*
'*Many such rushes, as these floors are strewed with,*
'*Stick to his shoes and garments; and the print*
'*Of several feet may in the snow be traced,*
'*From the stark body to the very door;*'

These are presumptions he was murdered here,
And that the assassins, having borne his corpse
Into the fields, hither returned again.
Mos. Are these your proofs?
Green. These are but circumstances,
And only prove thy malice.
Frank. And this scarf,
Known to be Arden's, in the court was found,
All blood.—
Mayor. Search them.
Mich. I thought I'd thrown it down the well. [*Aside.*
Mayor. [*To an Officer.*] Enter that room, and search the lady there;
We may, perhaps, discover more.
[*Officer goes out, and re-enters; in the mean time, another Officer searches* MOSBY *and* GREEN.
1 *Offi.* On Arden's wife I found this letter.
2 *Offi.* And I this ring on Mosby.
Mayor. Righteous Heaven!
Well may'st thou hang thy head, detested villain!
This very day did Arden wear this ring;
I saw it on his hand.
Mos. I freely yield me to my fate.

Enter another Officer.

Offi. We've seized two men behind some stacks of wood.
Mayor. Well, bring them in.

BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG *brought in.*

They answer the description;
But let them wait, till I have done with these.
Heavens! what a scene of villany is here!
[*Having read the letter.*
B. Will. Since we are sure to die, though I could wish it were in better company (for I hate that fawning rascal, Mosby,) I will tell the truth for once. He has been long engaged in an affair with Arden's wife there; but fearing a discovery,

and hoping to get into his estate, hired us to hide him. That's all.

Mayor. And you the horrid deed performed?

Shake. We did, with his assistance, and Green's and Michael's.

Mayor. This letter proves Alicia, from the first,
Was made acquainted with your black design.

B. Will. I know nothing of that; but if she was, she repented of it afterwards. So, I think, you call a change of mind.

Mayor. That may avail her at the bar of heaven,
But is no plea at ours: [ALICIA *brought in.*] Bear them to prison;
Load them with irons, make them feel their guilt,
And groan away their miserable hours,
Till sentence of the law shall call them forth
To public execution.

Alic. I adore
The unerring hand of justice; and with silence
Had yielded to my fate, but for this maid,
Who, as my soul dreads justice on her crimes,
Knew not, or e'er consented to, this deed.

Mayor. But did she not consent to keep it secret?

Mos. To save a brother, and most wretched friend—

Mayor. She has undone herself. Behold how innocence
May suffer in bad fellowship.—And Bradshaw,
My honest neighbour Bradshaw, too: I read it
With grief and wonder.—

Brad. Madam, I appeal
To you; as you are shortly to appear
Before a judge, that sees our secret thoughts,
Say, had I knowledge, or—

Alic. You brought the letter,
But well I hope, you knew not the contents.

Mayor. Hence with them all, till time and farther light
Shall clear these mysteries.

A. Fowl. If I'm condemned,
My blood be on his head, that gives the sentence.
I'm not accused, and only ask for justice.

Frank. You shall have justice all, and rigorous justice.
So shall the growth of such enormous crimes,
By their dread fate, be checked in future times.
Of avarice, Mosby a dread instance prove,
And poor Alicia of unlawful love!

[*Exeunt omnes.*

ZARA.

BY

HILL.

PROLOGUE.

THE French, howe'er mercurial they may seem,
Extinguish half the fire, by critic phlegm;
While English writers nature's freedom claim,
And warm their scenes with an ungovern'd flame:
'Tis strange that nature never should inspire
A Racine's judgment with a Shakespeare's fire!
Howe'er to-night—(to promise much we're loth)
But——you've a chance, to have a taste of both.
From English plays, Zara's French author fir'd,
Confess'd his muse beyond herself inspir'd;
From rack'd Othello's rage he rais'd his style,
And snatch'd the brand that lights this tragic pile;
Zara's success his utmost hopes outflew,
And a twice twentieth weeping audience drew.
As for our English friend, he leaves to you,
Whate'er may seem to his performance due;
No views of gain his hopes or fears engage,
He *gives* a child of leisure to the stage;
Willing to try, if yet forsaken nature
Can charm, with any one remember'd feature.
Thus far the author speaks——but now the player,
With trembling heart, prefers his humble prayer.
To-night, the greatest venture of my life,
Is lost or sav'd, as *you* receive——a wife: *
If time, you think, may ripen her to merit,
With gentle smiles, support her wav'ring spirit.
Zara in France, at once an actress rais'd,
Warm'd into skill, by being kindly prais'd:
Oh! could such wonders here from favour flow,
How would our Zara's heart with transport glow!
But she, alas! by juster fears oppress'd,
Begs but your bare endurance, at the best;
Her unskill'd tongue would simple nature speak,
Nor dares *her* bounds, for false applauses, break.
Amidst a thousand faults, her best pretence
To please——is unpresuming innocence.
When a chaste heart's distress your grief demands,
One silent tear outweighs a thousand hands.
If she conveys the pleasing passions right,
Guard and support her this decisive night;
If she mistakes, or finds her strength too small,
Let interposing pity——break her fall.
In you it rests, to save her, or destroy;
If she draws tears from you, I weep——for joy.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

OSMAN, *Sultan of Jerusalem.*
LUSIGNAN, *last of the blood of the Christian kings of Jerusalem.*
NERESTAN, CHATILLON, } *French officers.*
ORASMIN, *Minister to the Sultan.*
MELIDOR, *an officer of the Seraglio.*

WOMEN.

ZARA, SELIMA, } *Slaves of the Sultan.*

SCENE,—*Jerusalem.*

* Zara was performed in 1735, and first introduced to the stage the justly celebrated MRS CIBBER. She had not then attained her twentieth year, but those, who witnessed the whole of her after theatrical career, have declared that her talents admitted no improvement:—She burst forth at once in the maturity of grace and excellence. The effect on the audience may be conceived. The prologue was, of course, spoken by Mr Cibber.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter ZARA *and* SELIMA.

Sel. It moves my wonder, young and beauteous Zara,
Whence these new sentiments inspire your heart!
Your peace of mind increases with your charms:
Tears now no longer shade your eyes' soft lustre:
You meditate no more those happy climes,
To which Nerestan will return to guide you.
You talk no more of that gay nation now,
Where men adore their wives, and woman's power
Draws reverence from a polished people's softness,
Their husbands' equals, and their lovers' queens;
Free without scandal; wise without restraint;
Their virtue due to nature, not to fear.
Why have you ceased to wish this happy change?
A barred seraglio!—sad, unsocial life!
Scorned, and a slave! All this has lost its terror;
And Syria rivals, now, the banks of Seine.

Zar. Joys, which we do not know, we do not wish.
My fate's bound in by Sion's sacred wall:
Closed, from my infancy, within this palace,
Custom has learnt, from time, the power to please.
I claim no share in the remoter world,
The sultan's property, his will my law;
Unknowing all but him, his power, his fame,
To live his subject is my only hope,
All else an empty dream.

Sel. Have you forgot
Absent Nerestan then, whose generous friendship
So nobly vowed redemption from your chains?
How oft have you admired his dauntless soul!
Osman, his conqueror, by his courage charmed,
Trusted his faith, and on his word released him:
Though not returned in time—we yet expect him.
Nor had his noble journey other motive,
Than to procure our ransom.—And is this,
This dear, warm hope, become an idle dream?

Zar. Since after two long years he not returns,
'Tis plain his promise stretch'd beyond his power.
A stranger and a slave, unknown, like him,
Proposing much, means little;—talks and vows,
Delighted with a prospect of escape:——
He promis'd to ransom ten Christians more,
And free us all from slavery!—I own
I once admired the unprofitable zeal,
But now it charms no longer.

Sel. What if yet,
He, faithful, should return, and hold his vow;
Would you not then——

Zar. No matter——Time is past,
And every thing is changed——

Sel. But, whence comes this?

Zar. Go—'twere too much to tell thee Zara's fate:
The sultan's secrets, all, are sacred here:
But my fond heart delights to mix with thine.
Some three months past, when thou, and other slaves,
Were forc'd to quit fair Jordan's flowery bank,
Heaven, to cut short the anguish of my days,
Rais'd me to comfort by a powerful hand:
This mighty Osman———

Sel. What of him?

Zar. This sultan,
This conqueror of the Christians, loves——

Sel. Whom?

Zar. Zara!——
Thou blushest, and I guess thy thoughts accuse me:
But, know me better——'twas unjust suspicion.
All emperor as he is, I cannot stoop
To honours, that bring shame and baseness with them:
Reason and pride, those props of modesty,
Sustain my guarded heart, and strengthen virtue:
Rather than sink to infamy, let chains
Embrace me with a joy, such love denies.
No—I shall now astonish thee;—His greatness
Submits to own a pure and honest flame.
Among the shining crowds, which live to please him,
His whole regard is fixed on me alone:
He offers marriage; and its rites now wait,
To crown me empress of this eastern world.

Sel. Your virtue and your charms deserve it all:
My heart is not surpris'd but struck to hear it.
If to be empress can complete your happiness,
I rank myself with joy among your slaves.

Zar. Be still my equal——and enjoy my blessings;
For, thou partaking, they will bless me more.

Sel. Alas! but Heaven! will it permit this marriage?
Will not this grandeur, falsely called a bliss,
Plant bitterness, and root it in your heart?
Have you forgot you are of Christian blood?

Zar. Ah me! What hast thou said? why wouldst thou thus
Recal my wavering thoughts? How know I, what,
Or whence I am? Heaven kept it hid in darkness,
Concealed me from myself, and from my blood.

Sel. Nerestan, who was born a Christian, here
Asserts, that you, like him, had Christian parents;
Besides——that cross, which, from your infant years
Has been preserved, was found upon your bosom,
As if designed by Heaven, a pledge of faith

Due to the God you purpose to forsake.
Zar. Can my fond heart, on such a feeble proof,
Embrace a faith, abhorred by him I love?
I see too plainly custom forms us all;
Our thoughts, our morals, our most fixed belief,
Are consequences of our place of birth:
Born beyond Ganges, I had been a Pagan;
In France, a Christian; I am here a Saracen:
'Tis but instruction, all! Our parents' hand
Writes on our heart the first faint characters,
Which time, re-tracing, deepens into strength,
That nothing can efface, but death or Heaven.
Thou wert not made a prisoner in this place,
Till after reason, borrowing force from years,
Had lent its lustre to enlighten faith:——
For me, who, in my cradle, was their slave,
Thy Christian doctrines were too lately taught me;
Yet, far from having lost the reverence due,
This cross, as often as it meets my eye,
Strikes through my heart a kind of awful fear!
I honour, from my soul, the Christian law;
Those laws, which, softening nature by humanity,
Melt nations into brotherhood;—no doubt
Christians are happy; and 'tis just to love them.
Sel. Why have you, then, declared yourself their foe?
Why will you join your hand with this proud Osman's,
Who owes his triumph to the Christian ruin?
Zar. Ah!—who could slight the offer of his heart?
Nay—for I mean to tell thee all my weakness—
Perhaps I had, ere now, profest thy faith,
But Osman loved me—and I've lost it all:—
I think on none but Osman—my pleased heart,
Filled with the blessing, to be loved by him,
Wants room for other happiness. Place thou
Before thy eyes, his merit and his fame,
His youth, yet blooming but in manhood's dawn,
How many conquered kings have swelled his power!
Think, too, how lovely! how his brow becomes
This wreath of early glories!—Oh, my friend!
I talk not of a sceptre which he gives me:
No—to be charmed with that were thanks too humble,
Offensive tribute, and too poor for love!
'Twas Osman won my heart, not Osman's crown:
I love not in him aught besides himself.
Thou think'st, perhaps, that these are starts of passion:
But, had the will of Heaven, less bent to bless him,
Doom'd Osman to my chains, and me to fill
The throne that Osman sits on—ruin and wretchedness
Catch and consume my wishes, but I would,
To raise him to myself, descend to him.
Sel. Hark! the wish'd music sounds—'Tis he—he comes— [*Exit* SEL.
Zar. My heart prevented him, and found him near:
Absent two long whole days, the slow-paced hour
At last is come, and gives him to my wishes!
[*A grand march.*

Enter OSMAN *reading a Paper, which he re-delivers to* ORASMIN; *with Attendants.*

Osm. Wait my return—or, should there be a cause
That may require my presence, do not fear
To enter; ever mindful, that my own
[*Exit* ORAS. *&c.*
Follows my people's happiness.—At length,
Cares have released my heart—to love and Zara.
Zar. 'Twas not in cruel absence, to deprive me
Of your imperial image—every where
You reign triumphant: memory supplies
Reflection with your power; and you, like Heaven,
Are always present—and are always gracious.
Osm. The sultans, my great ancestors, bequeathed
Their empire to me, but their taste they gave not;
Their laws, their lives, their loves, delight not me.
I know our prophet smiles on am'rous wishes,
And opens a wide field to vast desire;
I know, that at my will I might possess;
That, wasting tenderness in wild profusion,
I might look down to my surrounded feet,
And bless contending beauties. I might speak,
Serenely slothful, from within my palace,
And bid my pleasure be my people's law.
But, sweet as softness is, its end is cruel.
I can look round, and count a hundred kings,
Unconquered by themselves, and slaves to others;
Hence was Jerusalem to Christians lost;
But Heaven, to blast that unbelieving race,
Taught me to be a king, by thinking like one.
Hence, from the distant Euxine to the Nile,
The trumpet's voice has wak'd the world to war,
Yet, amidst arms and death, thy power has reach'd me;
For thou disdain'st, like me, a languid love;
Glory and Zara join—and charm together.
Zar. I hear at once, with blushes and with joy,
This passion, so unlike your country's customs.
Osm. Passion, like mine, disdains my country's customs;
The jealousy, the faintness, the distrust,
The proud, superior coldness of the East.
I know to love you, Zara, with esteem;
To trust your virtue, and to court your soul.
Nobly confiding, I unveil my heart,
And dare inform you, that 'tis all your own:
My joys must all be yours: only my cares
Shall lie concealed within—and reach not Zara.
Zar. Obliged by this excess of tenderness,
How low, how wretched, was the lot of Zara!
Too poor with aught, but thanks, to pay such blessings!
Osm. Not so. I love, and would be loved again;
Let me confess it, I possess a soul,
That what it wishes, wishes ardently.
I should believe you hated, had you power
To love with moderation: 'tis my aim,

In every thing, to reach supreme perfection.
If with an equal flame I touch your heart,
Marriage attends your smile—But know, 'twill make
Me wretched, if it makes not Zara happy.
Zar. Ah, sir! if such a heart as generous Osman's
Can, from my will, submit to take its bliss,
What mortal ever was decreed so happy!
Pardon the pride with which I own my joy,
Thus wholly to possess the man I love!
To know and to confess his will my fate!
To be the happy work of his dear hands!
To be—

Enter ORASMIN.

Osm. Already interrupted! What?
Who?—Whence?
Oras. This moment, sir, there is arrived
That Christian slave, who, licensed on his faith,
Went hence to France—and, now returned, prays audience.
Zar. [*Aside.*] Oh, Heaven!
Osm. Admit him—What?—Why comes he not?
Oras. He waits without. No Christian dares approach
This place, long sacred to the sultan's privacies.
Osm. Go—bring him with thee—monarchs, like the sun,
Shine but in vain, unwarming, if unseen;
With forms and reverence, let the great approach us;
Not the unhappy;—every place alike,
Gives the distressed a privilege to enter.——
[*Exit* ORAS.
I think with horror on these dreadful maxims,
Which harden kings insensibly to tyrants.

Re-enter ORASMIN *with* NERESTAN.

Ner. Imperial sultan! honoured, even by foes!
See me returned, regardful of my vow,
And punctual to discharge a Christian's duty.
I bring the ransom of the captive Zara,
Fair Selima, the partner of her fortune,
And of ten Christian captives, prisoners here.
You promised, sultan, if I should return,
To grant their rated liberty:—Behold,
I am returned, and they are yours no more.
I would have stretched my purpose to myself,
But fortune has denied it;—my poor all
Sufficed no further, and a noble poverty
Is now my whole possession.—I redeem
The promised Christians; for I taught them hope:
But, for myself, I come again your slave,
To wait the fuller hand of future charity.
Osm. Christian! I must confess thy courage charms me.
But let thy pride be taught, it treads too high,
When it presumes to climb above my mercy.
Go ransomless thyself, and carry back
Their unaccepted ransoms, joined with gifts,
Fit to reward thy purpose; instead of ten,
Demand a hundred Christians; they are thine:
Take them, and bid them teach their haughty country,
They left some virtue among Saracens.—
Be Lusignan alone excepted—He,
Who boasts the blood of kings, and dares lay claim
To my Jerusalem—that claim, his guilt.
Such is the law of states; had I been vanquished,
Thus had he said of me. I mourn his lot,
Who must in fetters, lost to day-light, pine,
And sigh away old age in grief and pain.
For Zara—but to name her as a captive,
Were to dishonour language;—she's a prize
Above thy purchase:—all the Christian realms,
With all their kings to guide them, would unite
In vain, to force her from me.—Go, retire.—
Ner. For Zara's ransom, with her own consent,
I had your royal word. For Lusignan—
Unhappy, poor old man——
Osm. Was I not heard?
Have I not told thee, Christian, all my will?
What if I praised thee!—This presumptuous virtue,
Compelling my esteem, provokes my pride;
Be gone—and when to-morrow's sun shall rise
On my dominions, be not found—too near me.
[*Exit* NERESTAN.
Zar. [*Aside.*] Assist him, Heaven!
Osm. Zara, retire a moment—
Assume, throughout my palace, sovereign empire,
While I give orders to prepare the pomp
That waits to crown thee mistress of my throne.
[*Leads her out and returns.*
Orasmin! didst thou mark the imperious slave!
What could he mean?—he sighed—and, as he went,
Turned and looked back at Zara!—didst thou mark it?
Oras. Alas! my sovereign master! let not jealousy
Strike high enough to reach your noble heart.
Osm. Jealousy, saidst thou? I disdain it:—No!
Distrust is poor; and a misplaced suspicion
Invites and justifies the falsehood feared.—
Yet, as I love with warmth—so, I could hate!
But Zara is above disguise and art:
My love is stronger, nobler, than my power.
Jealous!—I was not jealous! If I was,
I am not—no—my heart—but, let us drown
Remembrance of the word, and of the image:
My heart is filled with a diviner flame.—
Go, and prepare for the approaching nuptials.
Zara to careful empire joins delight.
I must allot one hour to thoughts of state,
Then, all the smiling day is love and Zara's.
[*Exit* ORASMIN
Monarchs, by forms of pompous misery pressed,
In proud, unsocial misery, unblessed,
Would, but for love's soft influence, curse their throne,
And, among crowded millions, live alone. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

NERESTAN, CHATILLON.

Cha. Matchless Nerestan! generous and great!
You, who have broke the chains of hopeless slaves!
You, Christian saviour! by a Saviour sent!
Appear, be known, enjoy your due delight;
The grateful weepers wait to clasp your knees,
They throng to kiss the happy hand that saved them:
Indulge the kind impatience of their eyes,
And, at their head, command their hearts for ever.
Ner. Illustrious Chatillon! this praise o'erwhelms me;
What have I done beyond a Christian's duty;
Beyond what you would, in my place, have done?
Chat. True—it is every honest Christian's duty;
Nay, 'tis the blessing of such minds as ours,
For others' good to sacrifice our own.—
Yet, happy they, to whom Heaven grants the power,
To execute, like you, that duty's call.
For us—the relicks of abandoned war,
Forgot in France, and in Jerusalem,
Left to grow old in fetters,—Osman's father
Consign'd us to the gloom of a damp dungeon,
Where, but for you, we must have groaned out life,
And native France have blessed our eyes no more.
Ner. The will of gracious Heaven, that softened Osman,
Inspired me for your sakes:—But, with our joy,
Flows, mixed, a bitter sadness—I had hoped
To save from their perversion a young beauty,
Who, in her infant innocence, with me,
Was made a slave by cruel Noradin;
When, sprinkling Syria with the blood of Christians,
Cæsarea's walls saw Lusignan surprised,
And the proud crescent rise in bloody triumph.
From this seraglio having young escaped,
Fate, three years since, restored me to my chains;
Then, sent to Paris on my plighted faith,
I flattered my fond hope with vain resolves,
To guide the lovely Zara to that court
Where Lewis has established virtue's throne:
But Osman will detain her—yet, not Osman;
Zara herself forgets she is a Christian,
And loves the tyrant sultan!—Let that pass:
I mourn a disappointment still more cruel;
The prop of all our Christian hope is lost!
Chat. Dispose me at your will—I am your own.
Ner. Oh, sir, great Lusignan, so long their captive,
That last of an heroic race of kings!
That warrior, whose past fame has fill'd the world!
Osman refuses to my sighs for ever!
Chat. Nay, then, we have been all redeemed in vain;
Perish that soldier who would quit his chains,
And leave his noble chief behind in fetters.
Alas! you know him not as I have known him;
Thank Heaven, that placed your birth so far removed
From those detested days of blood and woe:
But I, less happy, was condemned to see
Thy walls, Jerusalem, beat down—and all
Our pious fathers' labours lost in ruins!
Heaven! had you seen the very temple rifled!
The sacred sepulchre itself profaned!
Fathers with children mingled, flame together!
And our last king, oppressed with age and arms,
Murdered, and bleeding o'er his murdered sons!
Then Lusignan, sole remnant of his race,
Rallying our fated few amidst the flames,
Fearless, beneath the crush of falling towers,
The conquerors and the conquered, groans and death!
Dreadful—and, waving in his hand his sword,
Red with the blood of infidels, cried out,
This way, ye faithful Christians! follow me.—
Ner. How full of glory was that brave retreat!
Chat. 'Twas heaven, no doubt, that saved and led him on,
Pointed his path, and marched our guardian guide:
We reached Cæsarea—there the general voice
Chose Lusignan thenceforth to give us laws;
Alas! 'twas vain—Cæsarea could not stand
When Sion's self was fallen!—we were betrayed;
And Lusignan condemned to length of life,
In chains, in damps, and darkness and despair:
Yet great, amidst his miseries, he looked,
As if he could not feel his fate himself,
But as it reached his followers. And shall we,
For whom our generous leader suffered this,
Be vilely safe, and dare be blessed without him?
Ner. Oh! I should hate the liberty he shared not.
I knew too well the miseries you describe,
For I was born amidst them. Chains and death,
Cæsarea lost, and Saracens triumphant,
Were the first objects which my eyes e'er looked on.
Hurried, an infant, among other infants,
Snatched from the bosom of their bleeding mothers,
A temple saved us, till the slaughter ceased;
Then were we sent to this ill-fated city,
Here, in the palace of our former kings,
To learn, from Saracens, their hated faith,
And be completely wretched.—Zara, too,

Shared this captivity; we both grew up
So near each other, that a tender friendship
Endeared her to my wishes: My fond heart—
Pardon its weakness, bleeds to see her lost,
And, for a barbarous tyrant, quit her God!
Chat. Such is the Saracens' too fatal policy!
Watchful seducers, still, of infant weakness:
Happy that you, so young, escap'd their hands!
But let us think—May not this Zara's interest,
Loving the sultan, and by him beloved,
For Lusignan procure some softer sentence?
The wise and just, with innocence, may draw
Their own advantage from the guilt of others.
Ner. How shall I gain admission to her presence?
Osman has banished me—but that's a trifle;
Will the seraglio's portals open to me?
Or, could I find that easy to my hopes,
What prospect of success from an apostate,
On whom I cannot look without disdain,
And who will read her shame upon my brow?
The hardest trial of a generous mind,
Is, to court favours from a hand it scorns.
Chat. Think it is Lusignan we seek to serve.
Ner. Well—it shall be attempted—Hark! who is this?
Are my eyes false; or, is it really she?

Enter ZARA.

Zar. Start not, my worthy friend! I come to seek you;
The sultan has permitted it; fear nothing:——
But to confirm my heart, which trembles near you,
Soften that angry air, nor look reproach;
Why should we fear each other, both mistaking?
Associates from our birth, one prison held us,
One friendship taught affliction to be calm,
'Till Heaven thought fit to favour your escape,
And call you to the fields of happier France;
Thence, once again, it was my lot to find you
A prisoner here; where, hid amongst a crowd
Of undistinguished slaves, with less restraint,
I shared your frequent converse;——
It pleased your pity, shall I say your friendship?
Or rather, shall I call it generous charity?
To form that noble purpose, to redeem
Distressful Zara—you procured my ransom,
And, with a greatness that out-soar'd a crown,
Returned yourself a slave, to give me freedom;
But Heaven has cast our fate for different climes:
Here, in Jerusalem, I fix for ever;
Yet, among all the shine that marks my fortune,
I shall, with frequent tears, remember yours;
Your goodness will for ever soothe my heart,
And keep your image still a dweller there:
Warmed by your great example to protect
That faith, which lifts humanity so high,
I'll be a mother to distressful Christians.
Ner. How!—You protect the Chistians! you, who can
Abjure their saving faith, and coldly see
Great Lusignan, their chief, die slow in chains!
Zar. To bring him freedom you behold me here;
You will this moment meet his eyes in joy.
Chat. Shall I then live to bless that happy hour?
Ner. Can Christians owe so dear a gift to Zara?
Zar. Hopeless I gathered courage to intreat
The sultan for his liberty—amazed,
So soon to gain the happiness I wished!
See where they bring the good old chief, grown dim
With age, by pain and sorrows hastened on!
Chat. How is my heart dissolved with sudden joy!
Zar. I long to view his venerable face;
But tears, I know not why, eclipse my sight.
I feel, methinks, redoubled pity for him;
But, I, alas! myself have been a slave;
And when we pity woes which we have felt,
'Tis but a partial virtue!
Ner. Amazement!—Whence this greatness in an infidel!

Enter LUSIGNAN *led in by two Guards.*

Lus. Where am I? From the dungeon's depth what voice
Has called me to revisit long-lost day?
Am I with Christians?—I am weak—forgive me,
And guide my trembling steps. I'm full of years;
My miseries have worn me more than age.
Am I, in truth, at liberty? [*Seating himself.*
Chat. You are;
And every Christian's grief takes end with yours.
Lus. O light! O, dearer far than light, that voice!
Chatillon, is it you? my fellow martyr?
And shall our wretchedness, indeed, have end?
In what place are we now!—my feeble eyes,
Disused to day-light, long in vain to find you.
Chat. This was the palace of your royal fathers:
'Tis now the son of Noradin's seraglio.
Zar. The master of this place—the mighty Osman,
Distinguishes, and loves to cherish virtue.
This generous Frenchman, yet a stranger to you,
Drawn from his native soil, from peace and rest,
Brought the vowed ransoms of ten Christian slaves,
Himself contented to remain a captive:
But Osman, charmed by greatness like his own,
To equal what he loved, has given him you.
Lus. So generous France inspires her social sons!
They have been ever dear and useful to me—
Would I were nearer to him—Noble sir,
[NERESTAN *approaches.*
How have I merited, that you for me
Should pass such distant seas to bring me blessings,
And hazard your own safety for my sake?
Ner. My name, sir, is Nerestan; born in Syria,
I wore the chains of slavery from my birth;
Till, quitting the proud crescent for the court
Where warlike Lewis reigns, beneath his eye

I learnt the trade of arms: the rank I held
Was but the kind distinction which he gave me,
To tempt my courage to deserve regard.
Your sight, unhappy prince, would charm his eye;
That best and greatest monarch will behold,
With grief and joy, those venerable wounds,
And print embraces where your fetters bound you.
All Paris will revere the cross's martyr;
Paris, the refuge still of ruined kings!
Lus. Alas! in times long past, I have seen its glory:
When Philip the Victorious lived, I fought
A-breast with Montmorency and Melun,
D'Estaing, De Neile, and the far-famous Courcy;
Names which were then the praise and dread of war!
But what have I to do at Paris now?
I stand upon the brink of the cold grave;
That way my journey lies—to find, I hope,
The King of Kings, and ask the recompence
For all my woes, long suffered for his sake——
You generous witnesses of my last hour,
While I yet live, assist my humble prayers,
And join the resignation of my soul.
Nerestan! Chatillon! and you, fair mourner!
Whose tears do honour to an old man's sorrows!
Pity a father, the unhappiest sure
That ever felt the hand of angry heaven!
My eyes, though dying, still can furnish tears;
Half my long life they flowed, and still will flow!
A daughter and three sons, my heart's proud hopes,
Were all torn from me in their tend'rest years—
My friend Chatillon knows, and can remember——
Chat. Would I were able to forget your woe.
Lus. Thou wert a prisoner with me in Cæsarea,
And there beheld'st my wife and two dear sons
Perish in flames.
Chat. A captive and in fetters,
I could not help them.
Lus. I know thou could'st not——
Oh, 'twas a dreadful scene! these eyes beheld it.
Husband and father, helpless I beheld it—
Denied the mournful privilege to die!
Oh, my poor children! whom I now deplore;
If ye are saints in Heaven, as sure ye are,
Look with an eye of pity on that brother,
That sister whom you left! If I have yet
Or son or daughter: for in early chains,
Far from their lost and unassisting father,
I heard that they were sent, with numbers more,
To this seraglio; hence to be dispersed
In nameless remnants o'er the east, and spread
Our Christian miseries round a faithless world.
Chat. 'Twas true—For in the horrors of that day,
I snatch'd your infant daughter from her cradle;
But, finding ev'ry hope of flight was vain,
Scarce had I sprinkled, from a public fountain,
Those sacred drops which wash the soul from sin,
When from my bleeding arms, fierce Saracens
Forc'd the lost innocent, who smiling lay,
And pointed, playful, at the swarthy spoilers!
With her, your youngest, then your only son,
Whose little life had reached the fourth sad year,
And just given sense to feel his own misfortunes,
Was order'd to this city
Ner. I too, hither,
Just at that fatal age, from lost Cæsarea,
Came in that crowd of undistinguished Christians.——
Lus. You! came you thence? Alas! who knows but you
Might heretofore have seen my two poor children
[*Looking up.*] Ah, madam! that small ornament you wear,
Its form a stranger to this country's fashion,
ow long has it been yours?
Zar. From my first birth, sir——
Ah, what! you seem surprised! why should this move you?
Lus. Would you confide it to my trembling hands?
Zar. To what new wonders am I now reserved?
Oh, sir! what mean you?
Lus. Providence and Heaven!
Oh, failing eyes, deceive ye not my hope?
Can this be possible?—Yes, yes—'tis she!
This little cross—I know it, by sure marks!
Oh! take me, Heaven! while I can die with joy——
Zar. Oh, do not, sir, distract me!—rising thoughts,
And hopes, and fears, o'erwhelm me!
Lus. Tell me, yet,
Has it remain'd for ever in your hands?
What——both brought captives from Cæsarea hither!
Zar. Both, both——
Oh, Heaven! have I then found a father?
Lus. Their voice! their looks!
The living images of their dear mother!
O God! who see'st my tears, and knowest my thoughts,
Do not forsake me at this dawn of hope——
Strengthen my heart, too feeble for this joy.
Madam! Nerestan! Help me, Chatillon!
[*Rising.*
Nerestan, hast thou on thy breast a scar,
Which, ere Cæsarea fell, from a fierce hand,
Surprising us by night, my child received?
Ner. Blessed hand!—I bear it—sir, the mark is there!
Lus. Merciful Heaven!
Ner. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, sir!—Oh, Zara, kneel!—
Zar. [*Kneeling.*] My father!—Oh!——
Lus. Oh, my lost children!
Both. Oh!
Lus. My son! my daughter! lost in embracing you,
I would now die, lest this should prove a dream!
Chat. How touched is my glad heart, to see their joy!

Lus. They shall not tear you from my arms—my children!
Again, I find you—dear in wretchedness:
Oh, my brave son—and thou, my nameless daughter!
Now dissipate all doubt, remove all dread;
Has Heaven, that gives me back my children—given them,
Such as I lost them?—Come they Christians to me?
One weeps, and one declines a conscious eye!
Your silence speaks—too well I understand it.
Zar. I cannot, sir, deceive you—Osman's laws
Were mine—and Osman is not a Christian.——
Lus. Her words are thunder bursting on my head;
Wert not for thee, my son, I now should die!
Full sixty years I fought the Christian cause,
Saw their doom'd temple fall, their pow'r destroyed:
Twenty, a captive, in a dungeon's depth,
Yet never for myself my tears sought Heaven;
All for my children rose my fruitless pray'rs:
Yet what avails a father's wretched joy?
I have a daughter gain'd, and Heaven an enemy.
Oh! my misguided daughter—lose not thy faith,
Reclaim thy birthright—think upon the blood
Of twenty Christian kings, that fills thy veins;
'Tis heroes' blood—the blood of saints and martyrs!
What would thy mother feel, to see thee thus!
She, and thy murder'd brothers!—think, they call thee;
Think that thou see'st them stretch their bloody arms,
And weep to win thee from their murderer's bosom.
Even in the place where thou betray'st thy God,
He died, my child, to save thee.—Turn thy eyes,
And see; for thou art near his sacred sepulchre;
Thou canst not move a step, but where he trod!
Thou tremblest—Oh! admit me to thy soul;
Kill not thy aged, thy afflicted father;
Take not thus soon, again, the life thou gav'st him:
Shame not thy mother—nor renounce thy God!
'Tis past—Repentance dawns in thy sweet eyes;
I see bright truth descending to thy heart,
And now, my long-lost child is found for ever!
Ner. Oh, doubly blest! a sister, and a soul,
To be redeem'd together!
Zar. Oh, my father!
Dear author of my life! inform me, teach me,
What should my duty do?
Lus. By one short word,
To dry up all my tears, and make life welcome,
Say thou art a Christian——
Zar. Sir—I am a Christian.
Lus. Receive her, gracious Heaven! and bless her for it.

Enter ORASMIN.

Oras. Madam, the sultan ordered me to tell you,
That he expects you instant quit this place,
And bid your last farewell to these vile Christians.
You, captive Frenchmen, follow me; for you,
It is my task to answer.——
Chat. Still new miseries!
How cautious man should be, to say, I'm happy!
Lus. These are the times, my friends, to try our firmness,
Our Christian firmness.——
Zar. Alas, sir! Oh!
Lus. Oh, you!—I dare not name you!
Farewell—but, come what may, be sure remember
You keep the fatal secret! for the rest,
Leave all to Heaven—be faithful, and be blest.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter OSMAN *and* ORASMIN.

Osm. Orasmin, this alarm was false and groundless;
Lewis no longer turns his arms on me;
The French, grown weary by a length of woes,
Wish not at once to quit their fruitful plains,
And famish on Arabia's desart sands.
Their ships, 'tis true, have spread the Syrian seas;
And Lewis, hovering o'er the coast of Cyprus,
Alarms the fears of Asia—But I've learnt,
That, steering wide from our unmenaced ports,
He points his thunder at the Egyptian shore.
There let him war, and waste my enemies;
Their mutual conflict will but fix my throne.
Release those Christians—I restore their freedom;
'Twill please their master, nor can weaken me;
Transport them at my cost, to find their king;
I wish to have him know me: carry thither
This Lusignan, whom, tell him, I restore,
Because I cannot fear his fame in arms;
But love him for his virtue and his blood.
Tell him, my father, having conquered twice,
Condemned him to perpetual chains; but I
Have set him free, that I might triumph more.
Oras. The Christians gain an army in his name.
Osm. I cannot fear a sound.——
Oras. But, sir——should Lewis——
Osm. Tell Lewis, and the world—It shall be so:
Zara proposed it, and my heart approves:
Thy satesman's reason is too dull for love!
Why wilt thou force me to confess it all?
Though I to Lewis send back Lusignan,
I give him but to Zara—I have grieved her;
And owed her the atonement of this joy.

Thy false advices, which but now misled
My anger, to confine those helpless Christians,
Gave her a pain; I feel for her and me:
But I talk on, and waste the smiling moments.
For one long hour I yet defer my nuptials;
But, 'tis not lost, that hour! 'twill be all hers!
She would employ it in a conference
With that Nerestan, whom thou know'st—that Christian.

Oras. And have you, sir, indulged that strange desire?

Osm. What mean'st thou? They were infant slaves together;
Friends should part kind, who are to meet no more.
When Zara asks, I will refuse her nothing:
Restraint was never made for those we love.
Down with those rigours of the proud seraglio;
I hate its laws—where blind austerity
Sinks virtue to necessity.—My blood
Disclaims your Asian jealousy;—I hold
The fierce, free plainness of my Scythian ancestors,
Their open confidence, their honest hate,
Their love unfearing, and their anger bold.
Go—the good Christian waits—conduct him to her;
Zara expects thee—What she wills, obey.

[*Exit* Osm.

Oras. Ho! Christian! enter—wait a moment here.

Enter Nerestan.

Zara will soon approach—I go to find her.

[*Exit* Oras.

Ner. In what a state, in what a place, I leave her?
Oh, faith! oh, father! oh, my poor lost sister!
She's here——

Enter Zara.

Thank Heaven, it is not, then, unlawful
To see you, yet once more, my lovely sister!
Not all so happy!——We, who met but now,
Shall never meet again——for Lusignan——
We shall be orphans still, and want a father.

Zar. Forbid it Heaven!

Ner. His last sad hour's at hand———
That flow of joy, which followed our discovery,
Too strong and sudden for his age's weakness,
Wasting his spirits, dried the source of life,
And nature yields him up to time's demand.
Shall he not die in peace?—Oh! let no doubt
Disturb his parting moments with distrust;
Let me, when I return to close his eyes,
Compose his mind's impatience too, and tell him,
You are confirmed a Christian!

Zar. Oh! may his soul enjoy, in earth and heaven,
Eternal rest! nor let one thought, one sigh,
One bold complaint of mine, recall his cares!
But you have injured me, who still can doubt.—
What! am I not your sister? and shall you
Refuse me credit? You suppose me light;
You, who should judge my honour by your own,
Shall you distrust a truth I dared avow,
And stamp apostate on a sister's heart!

Ner. Ah! do not misconceive me!—if I erred,
Affection, not distrust, misled my fear;
Your will may be a Christian, yet not you;
There is a sacred mark—a sign of faith,
A pledge of promise, that must firm your claim,
Wash you from guilt, and open Heaven before you.
Swear, swear, by all the woes we all have borne,
By all the martyr'd saints, who call you daughter,
That you consent, this day, to seal our faith,
By that mysterious rite which waits your call.

Zar. I swear by Heaven, and all its holy host,
Its saints, its martyrs, its attesting angels,
And the dread presence of its living author,
To have no faith but yours;—to die a Christian!
Now, tell me what this mystic faith requires.

Ner. To hate the happiness of Osman's throne,
And love that God, who, through his maze of woes,
Has brought us all, unhoping, thus together.
For me—I am a soldier, uninstructed,
Not daring to instruct, though strong in faith:
But I will bring the ambassador of Heaven,
To clear your views, and lift you to your God!
Be it your task to gain admission for him.——
But where? for whom?—Oh! thou immortal Power!
Whence can we hope it, in this cursed seraglio?
Who is this slave of Osman? Yes, this slave!
Does she not boast the blood of twenty kings?
Is not her race the same with that of Lewis?
Is she not Lusignan's unhappy daughter?
A Christian, and my sister?—yet a slave!
A willing slave!—I dare not speak more plainly.

Zar. Cruel! go on—Alas! you do not know me!
At once, a stranger to my sacred fate,
My pains, my fears, my wishes, and my power:
I am—I will be Christian—will receive
This holy priest, with his mysterious blessing;
I will not do, nor suffer, aught unworthy
Myself, my father, or my father's race.
But, tell me——nor be tender on this point——
What punishment your Christian laws decree
For an unhappy wretch, who, to herself
Unknown, and all abandoned by the world,
Lost and enslaved, has, in her sovereign master,
Found a protector, generous as great,
Has touched his heart, and given him all her own?

Ner. The punishment of such a slave should be
Death in this world—and pain in that to come.

Zar. I am that slave—strike here—and save my shame!

Ner. Destruction to my hopes! Can it be you?

Zar. It is—Adored by Osman, I adore him:
This hour the nuptial rites will make us one.

Ner. What! marry Osman!—Let the world grow dark,
That the extinguished sun may hide thy shame!
Could it be thus, it were no crime to kill thee!

Zar. Strike, strike—I love him—yes, by Heaven I love him.

Ner. Death is thy due—but not thy due from me:
Yet, were the honour of our house no bar——
My father's fame, and the too gentle laws
Of that religion which thou hast disgraced——
Did not the God thou quittest hold back my arm——
Not there—I could not there—but, by my soul,
I would rush, desperate, to the sultan's breast,
And plunge my sword in his proud heart, who damns thee!
Oh! shame! shame! shame! at such a time as this!
When Lewis! that awakener of the world,
Beneath the lifted cross makes Egypt pale,
And draws the sword of Heaven to spread our faith,
Now to submit to see my sister doomed
A bosom slave to him, whose tyrant heart
But measures glory by the Christian's woe!
Yes—I will dare acquaint our father with it;
Departing Lusignan may live so long,
As just to hear thy shame, and die to escape it.
Zar. Stay—my too angry brother—stay—perhaps,
Zara has resolution great as thine:
'Tis cruel—and unkind.—Thy words are crimes;
My weakness but misfortune. Dost thou suffer?
I suffer more;—Oh! would to Heaven this blood
Of twenty boasted kings would stop at once,
And stagnate in my heart!—It then no more
Would rush, in boiling fevers, through my veins,
And every trembling drop be filled with Osman.
How has he loved me! how has he obliged me!
I owe thee to him! What has he not done,
To justify his boundless power of charming?
For me, he softens the severe decrees
Of his own faith;—and is it just that mine
Should bid me hate him, but because he loves me?
No——I will be a Christian——but preserve
My gratitude as sacred as my faith;
If I have death to fear for Osman's sake,
It must be from his coldness, not his love.
Ner. I must at once condemn and pity thee;
I cannot point thee out which way to go,
But Providence will lend its light to guide thee.
That sacred rite, which thou shalt now receive,
Will strengthen and support thy feeble heart,
To live an innocent, or die a martyr:
Here, then, begin performance of thy vow;
Here, in the trembling horrors of thy soul,
Promise thy king, thy father, and thy God,
Not to accomplish thy detested nuptials,
Till first the reverend priest has cleared your eyes,
Taught you to know, and given you claim to Heaven.
Promise me this———
Zar. So, bless me, Heaven! I do——
Go—hasten the good priest, I will expect him;
But first return—cheer my expiring father,
Tell him I am, and will be, all he wishes me:
Tell him, to give him life 'twere joy to die.

Ner. I go—Farewell—farewell, unhappy sister! [*Exit* NER.
Zar. I am alone—and now be just, my heart!
And tell me, wilt thou dare betray thy God?
What am I? What am I about to be?
Daughter of Lusignan—or wife to Osman?
Am I a lover most, or most a Christian?
Would Selima were come! and yet 'tis just,
All friends should fly her who forsakes herself.
What shall I do?—What heart has strength to bear
These double weights of duty?—Help me, Heaven!
To thy hard laws I render up my soul;
But, oh! demand it back—for now 'tis Osman's.

Enter OSMAN.

Osm. Shine out, appear, be found, my lovely Zara!
Impatient eyes attend—the rites expect thee;
And my devoted heart no longer brooks
This distance from its softener!—all the lamps
Of nuptial love are lighted, and burn pure,
As if they drew their brightness from thy blushes:
The holy mosque is filled with fragrant fumes,
Which emulate the sweetness of thy breathing;
My prostrate people all confirm my choice,
And send their souls to Heaven in prayers for blessings:
Thy envious rivals, conscious of thy right,
Approve superior charms, and join to praise thee;
The throne, that waits thee, seems to shine more richly,
As all its gems with animated lustre,
Feared to look dim beneath the eyes of Zara!
Come, my slow love! the ceremonies wait thee;
Come, and begin from this dear hour my triumph.
Zar. Oh! what a wretch am I! Oh, grief! Oh, love!
Osm. Come——come——
Zar. Where shall I hide my blushes?
Osm. Blushes!—here, in my bosom, hide them.
Zar. My lord!
Osm. Nay, Zara—give me thy hand and come——
Zar. Instruct me, Heaven!
What should I say—Alas! I cannot speak.
Osm. Away——this modest, sweet reluctant trifling
But doubles my desires, and thy own beauties.
Zar. Ah, me!
Osm. Nay—but thou should'st not be too cruel.
Zar. I can no longer bear it—Oh, my lord—
Osm. Ha!—What?—whence?—how?———
Zar. My lord! my sovereign!
Heaven knows this marriage would have been a bliss
Above my humble hopes!—yet, witness love!
Not from the grandeur of your throne, that bliss,
But from the pride of calling Osman mine.
Would you had been no emperor! and I
Possessed of power and charms deserving you!
That, slighting Asia's thrones, I might alone
Have left a proffered world, to follow you

Through desarts, uninhabited by men,
And blessed with ample room for peace and love;
But, as it is——these Christians——
Osm. Christians! What!
How start two images into thy thoughts,
So distant——as the Christians and my love!
Zar. That good old Christian, reverend Lusignan,
Now dying, ends his life and woes together.
Osm. Well! let him die—What has thy heart to feel,
Thus pressing, and thus tender, from the death
Of an old wretched Christian!—Thank our prophet,
Thou art no Christian!—Educated here,
Thy happy youth was taught our better faith:
Sweet as thy pity shines, 'tis now mis-timed.
What! though an aged sufferer dies unhappy,
Why should his foreign fate disturb our joys?
Zar. Sir, if you love me, and would have me think
That I am truly dear——
Osm. Heaven! if I love!
Zar. Permit me——
Osm. What?
Zar. To desire——
Osm. Speak out.
Zar. The nuptial rites
May be deferred till——
Osm. What!—Is that the voice
Of Zara!
Zar. Oh, I cannot bear his frown!
Osm. Of Zara!
Zar. It is dreadful to my heart,
To give you but a seeming cause for anger;
Pardon my grief—Alas! I cannot bear it;
There is a painful terror in your eye,
That pierces to my soul—hid from your sight,
I go to make a moment's truce with tears,
And gather force to speak of my despair.
[*Exit disordered.*
Osm. I stand immoveable, like senseless marble;
Horror had frozen my suspended tongue;
And an astonished silence robbed my will
Of power to tell her that she shocked my soul!
Spoke she to me?—Sure I misunderstood her!
Could it be me she left?—What have I seen!

Enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin, what a change is here!—She's gone,
And I permitted it, I know not how.
Oras. Perhaps you but accuse the charming fault
Of innocence, too modest oft in love.
Osm. But why, and whence those tears?—those looks? that flight?
That grief, so strongly stamped on every feature?
If it has been that Frenchman!—What a thought!
How low, how horrid a suspicion that!
The dreadful flash at once gives light and kills me;
My too bold confidence repelled my caution—
An infidel! a slave!—a heart like mine
Reduced to suffer from so vile a rival!
But, tell me, didst thou mark them at their parting?
Didst thou observe the language of their eyes?
Hide nothing from me——Is my love betrayed?
Tell me my whole disgrace: nay, if thou tremblest,
I hear thy pity speak, though thou art silent.
Oras. I tremble at the pangs I see you suffer.
Let not your angry apprehension urge
Your faithful slave to irritate your anguish;
I did, 'tis true, observe some parting tears;
But they were tears of charity and grief:
I cannot think there was a cause deserving
This agony of passion——
Osm. Why no—I thank thee———
Orasmin, thou art wise! It could not be
That I should stand exposed to such an insult.
Thou know'st, had Zara meant me the offence,
She wants not wisdom to have hid it better:
How rightly didst thou judge!—Zara shall know it,
And thank thy honest service—After all,
Might she not have some cause for tears, which I
Claim no concern in—but the grief it gives her?
What an unlikely fear—from a poor slave,
Who goes to-morrow, and, no doubt, who wishes,
Nay, who resolves, to see these climes no more.
Oras. Why did you, sir, against our country's custom,
Indulge him with a second leave to come?
He said, he should return once more to see her.
Osm. Return! the traitor! he return!—Dares he
Presume to press a second interview?
Would he be seen again?—He shall be seen;
But dead.—I'll punish the audacious slave,
To teach the faithless fair to feel my anger.
Be still, my transports; violence is blind:
I know my heart at once is fierce and weak;
I feel that I descend below myself;
Zara can never justly be suspected;
Her sweetness was not formed to cover treason:
Yet Osman must not stoop to woman's follies;
Their tears, complaints, regrets, and reconcilements,
With all their light, capricious roll of changes,
Are arts too vulgar to be tried on me.
It would become me better to resume
The empire of my will. Rather than fall
Beneath myself, I must, how dear soe'er
It costs me, rise—till I look down on Zara!——
Away—but mark me—these seraglio doors,
Against all Christians be they henceforth shut,
Close as the dark retreats of silent death.
[*Exit* ORASMIN.
What have I done, just Heaven! thy rage to move,
That thou should'st sink me down, so low to love!
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

ZARA, SELIMA.

Sel. Ah, madam! how at once I grieve your fate,
And how admire your virtue!—Heaven permits,
And Heaven will give you strength, to bear misfortune;
To break these chains, so strong, and yet so dear.
Zar. Oh, that I could support the fatal struggle!
Sel. The Eternal aids your weakness, sees your will,
Directs your purpose, and rewards your sorrows.
Zar. Never had wretch more cause to hope he does.
Sel. What! though you here no more behold your father!
There is a Father to be found above,
Who can restore that father to his daughter.
Zar. But I have planted pain in Osman's bosom;
He loves me, even to death! and I reward him
With anguish and despair.—How base! how cruel!
But I deserved him not; I should have been
Too happy, and the hand of Heaven repelled me.
Sel. What! will you then regret the glorious loss,
And hazard thus a victory bravely won?
Zar. Inhuman victory!—thou dost not know
This love so powerful, this sole joy of life,
This first, best hope of earthly happiness,
Is yet less powerful in my heart than Heaven!
To him who made that heart I offer it;
There, there, I sacrifice my bleeding passion;
I pour before him every guilty tear;
I beg him to efface the fond impression,
And fill, with his own image, all my soul:
But, while I weep and sigh, repent and pray,
Remembrance brings the object of my love,
And every light illusion floats before him.
I see, I hear him, and again he charms!
Fills my glad soul, and shines 'twixt me and Heaven!
Oh, all ye royal ancestors! Oh, father!
Mother! You Christians, and the Christians' God!
You who deprive me of this generous lover!
If you permit me not to live for him,
Let me not live at all, and I am blessed:
Let me die innocent; let his dear hand
Close the sad eyes of her he stooped to love,
And I acquit my fate, and ask no more.
But he forgives me not—regardless now,
Whether or how I live, or when I die.
He quits me, scorns me—and I yet live on,
And talk of death as distant!
Sel. Ah! despair not;
Trust your eternal helper, and be happy.
Zar. Why—what has Osman done, that he too should not?
Has heaven so nobly formed his heart to hate it?
Generous and just, beneficent and brave,
Were he but Christian—What can man be more?
I wish, methinks, this reverend priest were come,
To free me from these doubts, which shake my soul:
Yet know not why I should not dare to hope,
That Heaven, whose mercy all confess and feel,
Will pardon and approve the alliance wished:
Perhaps it seats me on the throne of Syria,
To tax my power for these good Christians' comfort.
Thou know'st the mighty Saladine, who first
Conquered this empire from my father's race,
Who, like my Osman, charmed the admiring world,
Drew breath, though Syrian, from a Christian mother.
Sel. What mean you, madam! Ah! you do not see—
Zar. Yes, yes—I see it all; I am not blind:
I see my country and my race condemn me;
I see, that, spite of all, I still love Osman.
What if I now go throw me at his feet,
And tell him there sincerely what I am?
Sel. Consider—that might cost your brother's life,
Expose the Christians, and betray you all.
Zar. You do not know the noble heart of Osman.
Sel. I know him the protector of a faith,
Sworn enemy to ours—The more he loves,
The less he will permit you to profess
Opinions which he hates: to-night the priest,
In private introduced, attends you here;
You promised him admission——
Zar. Would I had not!
I promised, too, to keep this fatal secret:
My father's urged command required it of me;
I must obey, all dangerous as it is;
Compelled to silence, Osman is enraged,
Suspicion follows, and I lose his love. [*Exit* SEL.

Enter OSMAN.

Osm. Madam! there was a time when my charmed heart
Made it a virtue to be lost in love;
When, without blushing, I indulged my flame,
And every day still made you dearer to me.
You taught me, madam, to believe my love
Rewarded and returned—nor was that hope,
Methinks, too bold for reason. Emperors,
Who chuse to sigh devoted at the feet
Of beauties, whom the world conceive their slav
Have fortune's claim, at least, to sure succes
But 'twere profane to think of power in love.
Dear as my passion makes you, I decline

Possession of her charms, whose heart's another's.
You will not find me a weak, jealous lover,
By coarse reproaches, giving pain to you,
And shaming my own greatness. Wounded deeply,
Yet shunning and disdaining low complaint,
I come———to tell you———
Zar. Give my trembling heart
A moment's respite——
Osm. That unwilling coldness
Is the just prize of your capricious lightness;
Your ready arts may spare the fruitless pains
Of colouring deceit with fair pretences;
I would not wish to hear your slight excuses;
I cherish ignorance, to save my blushes.
Osman in every trial shall remember
That he is emperor. Whate'er I suffer,
'Tis due to honour that I give up you,
And to my injured bosom take despair,
Rather than shamefully possess you sighing,
Convinced those sighs were never meant for me—
Go, madam—you are free—from Osman's power—
Expect no wrongs; but see his face no more.
Zar. At last, 'tis come—the feared, the murdering moment
Is come—and I am cursed by earth and heaven!
[*Throws herself on the ground.*
If it is true that I am loved no more——
If you——
Osm. It is too true, my fame requires it;
It is too true that I unwillingly leave you:
That I at once renounce you and adore——
Zara!——You weep!
Zar. If I am doomed to lose you,
If I must wander o'er an empty world,
Unloving and unloved——Oh! yet, do justice
To the afflicted——do not wrong me doubly:
Punish me, if it is needful to your peace,
But say not, I deserved it—This, at least,
Believe——for not the greatness of your soul
Is truth more pure and sacred—no regret
Can touch my bleeding heart, for I have lost
The rank of her you raise to share your throne.
I know I never ought to have been there;
My fate and my defects require I lose you.
But, ah! my heart was never known to Osman.
May Heaven, that punishes, for ever hate me,
If I regret the loss of aught but you.
Osm. Rise—rise, this means not love?
Zar. Strike———Strike me, Heaven!
Osm. What! is it love to force yourself to wound
The heart you wish to gladden? But I find
Lovers least know themselves; for I believed,
That I had taken back the power I gave you;
Yet see! you did but weep, and have resumed me!
Proud as I am———I must confess, one wish
Evades my power———the blessing to forget you.
Zara—thy tears were formed to teach disdain,
That softness can disarm it.———'Tis decreed,
I must for ever love—but from what cause,
If thy consenting heart partakes my fires,
Art thou reluctant to a blessing meant me?
Speak! Is it levity———or, is it fear?
Fear of a power that, but for blessing thee,
Had, without joy, been painful. Is it artifice?
Oh! spare the needless pains———Art was not made
For Zara.———Art, however innocent,
Looks like deceiving———I abhorred it ever.
Zar. Alas! I have no art; not even enough
To hide this love, and this distress you give me.
Osm. New riddles! Speak with plainness to my soul;
What canst thou mean?
Zar. I have no power to speak it.
Osm. Is it some secret dangerous to my state?
Is it some Christian plot grown ripe against me?
Zar. Lives there a wretch so vile as to betray you!
Osman is blessed beyond the reach of fear:
Fears and misfortunes threaten only Zara.
Osm. Why threaten Zara?
Zar. Permit me, at your feet,
Thus trembling, to beseech a favour from you.
Osm. A favour! Oh, you guide the will of Osman.
Zar. Ah! would to Heaven our duties were united,
Firm as our thoughts and wishes! But this day,
But this one sad, unhappy day, permit me,
Alone, and far divided from your eye,
To cover my distress, lest you, too tender,
Should see and share it with me—from to-morrow,
I will not have a thought concealed from you.
Osm. What strange disquiet, from what stranger cause!
Zar. If I am really blessed with Osman's love,
He will not then refuse this humble prayer.
Osm. If it must be, it must.—Be pleased, my will
Takes purpose from your wishes; and consent
Depends not on my choice, but your decree:
Go——but remember how he loves, who thus
Finds a delight in pain, because you give it.
Zar. It gives me more than pain, to make you feel it.
Osm. And——can you, Zara, leave me?
Zar. Alas, my lord! [*Exit* ZARA.
Osm. [*Alone.*] It should be yet, methinks, too soon to fly me!
Too soon, as yet, to wrong my easy faith.
The more I think, the less I can conceive,
What hidden cause should raise such strange despair!
Now, when her hopes have wings, and every wish
Is courted to be lively! When I love,
And joy and empire press her to their bosom;
When not alone beloved, but even a lover:
Professing and accepting; blessed and blessing;
To see her eyes, through tears, shine mystic love!
'Tis madness! and I were unworthy power,
To suffer longer the capricious insult!
Yet, was I blameless? No—I was too rash;
I have felt jealousy, and spoke it to her;

I have distrusted her—and still she loves:
Generous atonement that! and 'tis my duty
To expiate, by a length of soft indulgence,
The transports of a rage, which still was love.
Henceforth, I never will suspect her false;
Nature's plain power of charming dwells about her,
And innocence gives force to every word.
I owe full confidence to all she looks,
For in her eyes shines truth, and every beam
Shoots confirmation round her. I remarked,
Even while she wept, her soul a thousand times
Sprung to her lips, and longed to leap to mine,
With honest, ardent utterance of her love.
Who can possess a heart so low, so base,
To look such tenderness, and yet have none?

Enter MELIDOR *with* ORASMIN.

Mel. This letter, great disposer of the world!
Addressed to Zara, and in private brought,
Your faithful guards this moment intercepted,
And humbly offer to your sovereign eye.
Osm. Come nearer, give it me.—To Zara!—Rise.
Bring it with speed——Shame on your flattering distance——
[*Advancing, and snatching the letter.*
Be honest——and approach me like a subject,
Who serves the prince, yet not forgets the man.
Mel. One of your Christian slaves, whom late your bounty
Released from bondage, sought with heedful guile,
Unnoticed to deliver it.———Discovered,
He waits, in chains, his doom from your decree.
Osm. Leave me! I tremble, as if something fatal
Were meant me from this letter——should I read it?
Oras. Who knows but it contains some happy truth,
That may remove all doubts, and calm your heart?
Osm. Be it as 'twill—it shall be read—my hands
Have apprehension that out-reaches mine!
Why should they tremble thus?— 'tis done—and now, [*Opens the letter.*
Fate, be thy call obeyed——Orasmin, mark——

'There is a secret passage toward the mosque;
'That way you might escape; and unperceived,
'Fly your observers, and fulfil our hope;
'Despise the danger, and depend on me,
'Who wait you, but to die if you deceive.'

Hell! tortures! death! and woman!—What, Orasmin!
Are we awake! Heard'st thou? Can this be Zara?
Oras. Would I had lost all sense—for what I heard
Has covered my afflicted heart with horror.
Osm. Thou seest how I am treated!
Oras. Monstrous treason!
To an affront like this, you cannot——must not
Remain insensible——You, who but now,
From the most slight suspicion, felt such pain,
Must, in the horror of so black a guilt,
Find an effectual cure, and banish love.
Osm. Seek her this instant—go, Orasmin, fly,
Shew her this letter—bid her read and tremble:
Then, in the rising horrors of her guilt,
Stab her unfaithful breast, and let her die.
Say, while thou strik'st———Stay, stay, return and pity me;
I will think first a moment—Let that Christian
Be strait confronted with her—Stay—I will,
I will—I know not what———Would I were dead!
Would I had died, unconscious of this shame!
Oras. Never did prince receive so bold a wrong.
Osm. See here detected this infernal secret!
This fountain of her tears, which my weak heart
Mistook for marks of tenderness and pain!
Why! what a reach has woman to deceive!
Under how fine a veil of grief and fear
Did she propose retirement 'till to-morrow!
And I, blind dotard! gave the fool's consent,
Soothed her, and suffered her to go!——She parted,
Dissolved in tears; and parted to betray me!
Oras. Reflection serves but to confirm her guilt.
At length resume yourself; awaken thought;
Assert your greatness; and resolve like Osman.
Osm. Nerestan, too—Was this the boasted honour
Of that proud Christian, whom Jerusalem
Grew loud in praising! whose half-envied virtue
I wondered at myself; and felt disdain
To be but equal to a Christian's greatness!
And does he thank me thus? base infidel!
Honest, pretending, pious, praying villain!
Yet Zara is a thousand times more base,
More hypocrite than he. A slave! a wretch!
So low, so lost, that even the vilest labours,
In which he lay condemned, could never sink him
Beneath his native infamy——Did she not know
What I have done, what suffered—for her sake?
Oras. Could you, my gracious lord, forgive my zeal,
You would———
Osm. I know it—thou art right—I'll see her—
I'll tax her in thy presence;—I'll upbraid her—
I'll let her learn—Go—find, and bring her to me.
Oras. Alas, my lord! disordered as you are,
What can you wish to say?
Osm. I know not, now—
But I resolve to see her—lest she think
Her falsehood has, perhaps, the power to grieve me.
Oras. Believe me, sir, your threatenings, your complaints,
What will they all produce, but Zara's tears
To quench this fancied anger! Your lost heart,
Seduced against itself, will search but reasons
To justify the guilt, which gives it pain:
Rather conceal from Zara this discovery;
And let some trusty slave convey the letter,
Reclosed, to her own hand—then shall you learn,
Spite of her frauds, disguise, and artifice,

The firmness, or abasement of her soul.
Osm. Thy counsel charms me! We'll about it now,
'Twill be some recompence, at least, to see
Her blushes when detected.
Oras. Oh, my lord!
I doubt you in the trial! for your heart——
Osm. Distrust me not—my love, indeed, is weak,
But honour and disdain more strong than Zara.
Here, take this fatal letter—chuse a slave,
Whom yet she never saw, and who retains
His tried fidelity—Dispatch—begone——
[*Exit* ORAS.
Now, whither shall I turn my eyes and steps,
The surest way to shun her: and give time
For this discovering trial?—Heaven! she's here!

Enter ZARA.

So, Madam! fortune will befriend my cause,
And free me from your fetters.—You are met
Most aptly, to dispel a new-risen doubt,
That claims the finest of your arts to gloss it.
Unhappy each by other, it is time
To end our mutual pain, that both may rest:
You want not generosity, but love;
My pride forgotten, my obtruded throne,
My favours, cares, respect, and tenderness,
Touching your gratitude, provok'd regard;
'Till, by a length of benefits besieg'd,
Your heart submitted, and you thought 'twas love:
But you deceived yourself and injured me.
There is, I'm told, an object more deserving
Your love than Osman——I would know his name:
Be just, nor trifle with my anger: tell me
Now, while expiring pity struggles faint,
While I have yet, perhaps, the power to pardon:
Give up the bold invader of my claim,
And let him die to save thee. Thou art known;
Think and resolve—While I yet speak, renounce him;
While yet the thunder rolls suspended, stay it;
Let thy voice charm me, and recall my soul,
That turns averse, and dwells no more on Zara.
Zar. Can it be Osman speaks, and speaks to Zara?
Learn, cruel! learn, that this afflicted heart,
This heart, which Heaven delights to prove by tortures,
Did it not love, has pride and power to shun you.
Alas! you will not know me! what have I
To fear, but that unhappy love you question?
That love, which only could outweigh the shame
I feel, while I descend to weep my wrongs.
I know not whether Heaven, that frowns upon me,
Has destined my unhappy days for yours;
But, be my fate or blessed or cursed, I swear
By honour, dearer even than life or love,
Could Zara be but mistress of herself,
She would, with cold regard, look down on kings,
And, you alone excepted, fly them all.
Would you learn more, and open all my heart?
Know, then, that, spite of this renewed injustice,
I do not—cannot wish to love you less:
That, long before you looked so low as Zara,
She gave her heart to Osman; yours, before
Your benefits had bought her, or your eye
Had thrown distinction round her; never had,
Nor ever will acknowledge other lover:——
And to this sacred truth, attesting Heaven,
I call thy dreadful notice! If my heart
Deserves reproach, 'tis for, but not from, Osman.
Osm. What! does she yet presume to swear sincerity!
Oh, boldness of unblushing perjury!
Had I not seen, had I not read such proof,
Of her light falsehood as extinguished doubt,
I could not be a man, and not believe her.
Zar. Alas, my lord! what cruel fears have seized you?
What harsh, mysterious words were those I heard?
Osm. What fears should Osman feel, since Zara loves him?
Zar. I cannot live and answer to your voice,
In that reproachful tone; your angry eye
Trembles with fury while you talk of love.
Osm. Since Zara loves him!
Zar. Is it possible
Osman should disbelieve it?—Again, again
Your late-repented violence returns——
Alas! what killing frowns you dart against me!
Can it be kind? Can it be just to doubt me?
Osm. No! I can doubt no longer—You may retire.
[*Exit* ZAR.

Re-enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin, she's perfidious, even beyond
Her sex's undiscovered power of seeming;
She's at the topmost point of shameless artifice;
An empress at deceiving! Soft and easy,
Destroying like a plague, in calm tranquillity:
She's innocent, she swears—so is the fire;
It shines in harmless distance, bright and pleasing,
Consuming nothing till it first embraces.
Say, hast thou chosen a slave?—Is he instructed?
Haste to detect her vileness and my wrongs.
Oras. Punctual I have obeyed your whole command:
But have you arm'd, my lord, your injured heart,
With coldness and indifference? Can you hear,
All painless and unmoved, the false one's shame?
Osm. Orasmin, I adore her more than ever.
Oras. My lord! my emperor! forbid it, Heaven!
Osm. I have discerned a gleam of distant hope;
This hateful Christian, the light growth of France,
Proud, young, vain, amorous, conceited, rash,
Has misconceived some charitable glance,
And judged it love in Zara: he alone,
Then, has offended me. Is it her fault,
If those she charms are indiscreet and daring?
Zara, perhaps, expected not this letter;
And I, with rashness groundless as its writer's,
Took fire at my own fancy, and have wronged her.

Now hear me with attention—Soon as night
Has thrown her welcome shadows o'er the palace;
When this Nerestan, this ungrateful Christian,
Shall lurk in expectation near our walls,
Be watchful that our guards surprise and seize him;
Then, bound in fetters, and o'erwhelmed with shame,
Conduct the daring traitor to my presence;—
But, above all, be sure you hurt not Zara;
Mindful to what supreme excess I love.
[*Exit* ORAS.
On this last trial all my hopes depend;
Prophet, for once thy kind assistance lend,
Dispel the doubts that rack my anxious breast,
If Zara's innocent, thy Osman's blest. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ZARA *and* SELIMA.

Zar. Soothe me no longer with this vain desire;
To a recluse like me, who dares henceforth
Presume admission!——the seraglio's shut——
Barred and impassable——as death to time!
My brother ne'er must hope to see me more:—
How now! what unknown slave accosts us here?

Enter MELIDOR.

Mel. This letter, trusted to my hands, receive,
In secret witness I am wholly yours.
[ZARA *reads the letter.*
Sel. [*Aside.*] Thou everlasting ruler of the world!
Shed thy wished mercy on our hopeless tears;
Redeem us from the hands of hated infidels,
And save my princess from the breast of Osman.
Zar. I wish, my friend, the comfort of your counsel.
Sel. Retire—you shall be called—wait near—
Go, leave us. [*Exit* MEL.
Zar. Read this, and tell me what I ought to answer:
For I would gladly hear my brother's voice.
Sel. Say rather you would hear the voice of Heaven.
'Tis not your brother calls you, but your God.
Zar. I know it, nor resist his awful will;
Thou know'st that I have bound my soul by oath;
But can I—ought I—to engage myself,
My brother, and the Christians, in this danger?
Sel. 'Tis not their danger that alarms your fears;
Your love speaks loudest to your shrinking soul;
I know your heart of strength to hazard all,
But it has let in traitors, who surrender,
On poor pretence of safety:—Learn at least,
To understand the weakness that deceives you:
You tremble to offend your haughty lover,
Whom wrongs and outrage but endear the more;
Yes—you are blind to Osman's cruel nature,
That Tartar's fierceness, that obscures his bounties;
This tyger, savage in his tenderness,
Courts with contempt, and threatens amidst softness;
Yet, cannot your neglected heart efface
His fated, fixed impression!
Zar. What reproach
Can I with justice make him? I, indeed,
Have given him cause to hate me!
Was not his throne, was not his temple ready?
Did he not court his slave to be a queen,
And have I not declined it?——I who ought
To tremble, conscious of affronted power!
Have not I triumphed o'er his pride and love?
Seen him submit his own high will to mine,
And sacrifice his wishes to my weakness?
Sel. Talk we no more of this unhappy passion:
What resolution will your virtue take?
Zar. All things combine to sink me to despair:
From the seraglio death alone will free me.
I long to see the Christians' happy climes;
Yet, in the moment, while I form that prayer,
I sigh a secret wish to languish here.
How sad a state is mine! my restless soul
All ignorant what to do, or what to wish,
My only perfect sense is that of pain.
Oh, guardian Heaven! protect my brother's life,
For I will meet him, and fulfil his prayer:
Then, when from Solyma's unfriendly walls,
His absence shall unbind his sister's tongue,
Osman shall learn the secret of my birth,
My faith unshaken, and my deathless love;
He will approve my choice and pity me.
I'll send my brother word he may expect me.
Call in the faithful slave——God of my fathers!
[*Exit* SEL.
Let thy hand save me, and thy will direct!

Enter SELIMA *and* MELIDOR.

Go—tell the Christian who intrusted thee,
That Zara's heart is fixed, nor shrinks at danger;
And that my faithful friend will, at the hour,
Expect, and introduce him to his wish.
Away—the sultan comes; he must not find us.
[*Exeunt* ZARA *and* SELIMA.

Enter OSMAN *and* ORASMIN.

Osm. Swifter, ye hours, move on; my fury glows
Impatient, and would push the wheels of time.
How now! What message dost thou bring? Speak boldly—
What answer gave she to the letter sent her?
Mel. She blushed and trembled, and grew pale, and paused.

Then blushed, and read it; and again grew pale;
And wept and smiled, and doubted and resolved:
For after all this race of varied passions,
When she had sent me out, and called me back,
'Tell him,' she cried, 'who has intrusted thee,
'That Zara's heart is fixed, nor shrinks at danger;
'And that my faithful friend will, at the hour,
'Expect, and introduce him to his wish.'
Osm. Enough—begone—I have no ear for more.— [*To the slave.*
Leave me, thou too, Orasmin.—Leave me, life,
[*To* ORASMIN.
For every mortal aspect moves my hate:
Leave me to my distraction—I grow mad,
And cannot bear the visage of a friend.
Leave me to rage, despair, and shame, and wrongs!
Leave me to seek myself—and shun mankind.
[*Exit* ORASMIN.
Who am I?—Heaven! Who am I? What resolve I?
Zara! Nerestan! sound these words like names
Decreed to join?—Why pause I?—Perish Zara—
Would I could tear her image from my heart!—
'Twere happier not to live at all, than live
Her scorn, the sport of an ungrateful false one!
And sink the sovereign in a woman's property.

Re-enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin!—Friend! return, I cannot bear
This absence from thy reason: 'twas unkind,
'Twas cruel to obey me, thus distressed,
And wanting power to think, when I had lost thee.
How goes the hour? Has he appeared, this rival?
Perish the shameful sound—This villain Christian!
Has he appeared below?
Oras. Silent and dark,
The unbreathing world is hushed, as if it heard,
And listened to your sorrows.
Osm. Oh, treacherous night!
Thou lend'st thy ready veil to every treason,
And teeming mischiefs thrive beneath thy shade.
Orasmin, prophet, reason, truth, and love!
After such length of benefits, to wrong me!
How have I over-rated, how mistaken,
The merit of her beauty!—Did I not
Forget I was a monarch? Did I remember
That Zara was a slave?—I gave up all;
Gave up tranquillity, distinction, pride,
And fell the shameful victim of my love!
Oras. Sir, sovereign, sultan, my imperial master!
Reflect on your own greatness,
The distant provocation.
Osm. Hark! Heard'st thou nothing?
Oras. My lord!
Osm. A voice, like dying groans!
Oras. I listen, but can hear nothing.
Osm. Again!—look out—he comes—
Oras. Nor tread of mortal foot—nor voice I hear:
The still seraglio lies, profoundly plunged
In death-like silence. Nothing stirs—The air
Is soft, as infant sleep; no breathing wing
Steals through the shadows, to awaken night.
Osm. Horrors a thousand times more dark than these
Benight my suffering soul—Thou dost not know
To what excess of tenderness I loved her;
I knew no happiness, but what she gave me,
Nor could have felt a misery but for her!
Pity this weakness—mine are tears, Orasmin,
That fall not oft, nor lightly.——
Oras. Tears!—Oh, Heaven!
Osm. The first that ever yet unmanned my eyes!
Oh! pity Zara—pity me—Orasmin,
These but forerun the tears of destined blood.
Oras. Oh, my unhappy lord!—I tremble for you—
Osm. Do—tremble at my sufferings, at my love;
At my revenge too, tremble—for 'tis due,
And will not be deluded.
Oras. Hark! I hear
The steps of men, along the neighbouring wall!
Osm, Fly—seize him—'tis Nerestan! Wait no chains,
But drag him down to my impatient eye.
[*Exit* ORASMIN.

Enter ZARA *and* SELIMA, *in the dark.*

Zar. Where art thou, Selima? Give me thy hand.
It is so dark, I tremble as I step,
With fears and startings, never felt till now!
Osm. Damnation! 'tis her voice! the well-known sound,
That has so often charmed me into baseness!
Oh, the perfidious hypocrite!—she goes
To meet the inviting infidel!——now, now,
[*Drawing a dagger.*
Revenge, stand firm, and intercept his wishes;—
Revenge! On whom?—No matter—Earth and Heaven
Would blush, should I forbear: now—Zara, now!
[*Drops the dagger.*
I must not, cannot strike! the starting steel,
Unwilling, flies my hand, and shuns to wound her.
Zar. This is the private path—come nearer, lead me—
Are we not noticed, think'st thou?
Sel. Fear not, madam;
It cannot now be long, ere we shall meet him.
Osm. That word has given me back my ebbing rage— [*Recovers the dagger.*
Zar. I walk in terror, and my heart forebodes.
Who's there?—Nerestan! Is it you!—O welcome—
Osm. [*Stabbing her.*] This to thy heart—'Tis not the traitor meets thee,
'Tis the betrayed—who writes it in thy blood.
Zar. Oh, gracious Heaven! receive my parting soul,
And take thy trembling servant to thy mercy—
[*Dies.*
Osm. Soul!—then revenge has reached thee—I will now

Haste from this fatal place—I cannot leave her!
Whom did I strike? Was this the act of love?
Swallow me, earth!—She's silent—Zara's dead!
And should I live to see returning day,
'Twill shew me but her blood!—shew me left joyless,
In a wide, empty world, with nothing round me,
But penitence and pain—And yet 'twas just:—
Hark!—Destiny has sent her lover to me,
To fill my vengeance, and restore my joy.

Enter ORASMIN *with* NERESTAN.

Approach, thou wretch! thou more than cursed! come near—
Thou, who, in gratitude for freedom gained,
Hast given me miseries beyond thy own!
Thou heart of hero with a traitor's soul!
Go—reap thy due reward! prepare to suffer,
Whate'er inventive malice can inflict,
To make thee feel thy death, and perish slow.
Are my commands obeyed?

Oras. All is prepared.

Osm. Thy wanton eyes look round, in search of her,
Whose love, descending to a slave like thee,
From my dishonoured hand received her doom.
See, where she lies!

Ner. Oh fatal, rash mistake!

Osm. Dost thou behold her, slave?

Ner. Unhappy sister!

Osm. Sister!—Didst thou say sister? If thou didst,
Bless me with deafness, Heaven!

Ner. Tyrant! I did—
She was my sister—All that now is left thee,
Dispatch—From my distracted heart drain next
The remnant of the royal Christian blood:
Old Lusignan, expiring in my arms,
Sent his too wretched son, with his last blessing,
To his now murdered daughter!—
Would I had seen the bleeding innocent!
I would have lived to speak to her in death:
Would have awakened, in her languid heart,
A livelier sense of her abandoned God:
That God, who, left by her, forsook her too,
And gave the poor lost sufferer to thy rage.

Osm. Thy sister!—Lusignan her father!—Selima!
Can this be true?—and have I wronged thee, Zara?

Sel. Thy love was all the cloud 'twixt her and Heaven!

Osm. Be dumb—for thou art base, to add distraction
To my already more than bleeding heart.
And was thy love sincere?—What then remains?

Ner. Why should a tyrant hesitate on murder?
There now remains but mine, of all the blood,
Which, through thy father's cruel reign and thine,
Has never ceased to stream on Syria's sands.
Restore a wretch to his unhappy race;
Nor hope that torments, after such a scene,
Can force one feeble groan to feast thy anger.
I waste my fruitless words in empty air;
The tyrant, o'er the bleeding wound he made,
Hangs his unmoving eye, and heeds not me.

Osm. Oh Zara!—

Oras. Alas! my lord, return—whither would grief
Transport your generous heart?—This Christian dog—

Osm. Take off his fetters, and observe my will;
To him, and all his friends, give instant liberty:
Pour a profusion of the richest gifts
On these unhappy Christians; and, when heaped
With varied benefits, and charged with riches,
Give them safe conduct to the nearest port.

Oras. But, sir—

Osm. Reply not, but obey.—
Fly—nor dispute thy master's last command,
Thy prince, who orders—and thy friend, who loves thee!
Go—lose no time—farewell—begone—and thou!
Unhappy warrior—yet less lost than I—
Haste from our bloody land—and to thy own
Convey this poor, pale object of my rage.
Thy king, and all his Christians, when they hear
Thy miseries, shall mourn them with their tears;
But, if thou tell'st them mine, and tell'st them truly,
They, who shall hate my crime, shall pity me.
Take, too, this poniard with thee, which my hand
Has stained with blood far dearer than my own;
Tell them—with this I murdered her I loved;
The noblest and most virtuous among women!
The soul of innocence, and pride of truth:
Tell them I laid my empire at her feet:
Tell them I plunged my dagger in her blood;
Tell them, I so adored—and thus revenged her.
[*Stabs himself.*
Reverence this hero—and conduct him safe.
[*Dies.*

Ner. Direct me, great inspirer of the soul!
How should I act, how judge in this distress?
Amazing grandeur! and detested rage!
Even I, amidst my tears, admire this foe,
And mourn his death, who lived to give me woe.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

HERE, take a surfeit, sirs, of being jealous,
And shun the pains that plague these Turkish fellows:
Where love and death join hands, their darts confounding:
Save us, good Heaven, from this new way of wounding.
Curst climate! where to cards a lone-left woman
Has only one of her black guards to summon!
Sighs, and sits moped, with her tame beast to gaze at:
And that cold treat is all the game she plays at!
For, should she once some abler hand be trying,
Poniard's the word! and the first deal is—dying!
'Slife! should the bloody whim get ground in Britain,
Where woman's freedom has such heights to sit on,
Dagger, provok'd, would bring on desolation,
And murdered belles unpeople half the nation!—
Fain would I hope this play, to move compassion,
And live to hunt suspicion out of fashion.—
Four motives strongly recommend the lover's
Hate of this weakness that our scene discovers.

First, then—A woman will or won't, depend on't:
If she will do't, she will:—and there's an end on't.
But if she won't—since safe and sound your trust is,
Fear is affront, and jealousy injustice.
Next—he who bids his dear do what she pleases,
Blunts wedlock's edge; and all its torture eases:
For—not to feel your sufferings, is the same,
As not to suffer:—all the difference—name.
Thirdly—The jealous husband wrongs his honour;
No wife goes lame, without some hurt upon her:
And the malicious world will still be guessing,
Who oft dines out, dislikes her own cook's dressing.
Fourthly, and lastly—to conclude my lecture,
If you would fix the inconstant wife, respect her.
She who perceives her virtues overrated,
Will fear to have the account more justly stated:
And borrowing, from her pride, the good wife's seeming,
Grow really such—to merit your esteeming.

KING CHARLES I.

BY

HAVARD.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

In former times, when wit was no offence,
And men submitted to be pleased with sense—
Then was the stage fair virtue's fav'rite school,
Scourge of the knave, and mirror of the fool.
Here oft the villain's conscious blush would rise,
And fools become, by viewing folly, wise.
Our bard, as then, despises song and dance,
The notes of Italy, and jigs of France:
With home distress he nobly hopes to move,
And fire each bosom with its country's love——
So much a Briton—that he scorns to roam
To foreign climes, to fetch his hero home——
Conscious that in these scenes is clearly shewn
Britain can boast true heroes of her own.
Murder avowed by law he boldly paints,
Heroes and patriots, hypocrites and saints;
Rebellion fighting for the public good,
And treason smiling in a monarch's blood.
Party, be dumb——in each pathetic scene,
Our muse, to-night, asserts an honest mean;
Shows you a prince triumphant o'er his fate,
Glorious in death, as in misfortunes great;
By nature virtuous, though misled by slaves,
By tools of power, by sycophants and knaves,
When Charles submits to faction's deadly blow,
What loyal heart but shares the monarch's woe?
Nor less Maria's grief, ye gentle fair,
Claims the sad tribute of a tender tear.
From British scenes to-night we hope applause,
And Britons sure will aid a British cause.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

King CHARLES.
Duke of YORK.
Duke of GLOUCESTER.
Bishop JUXON.
Duke of RICHMOND.
Marquis of LINDSEY.
OLIVER CROMWELL.
FAIRFAX.
BRADSHAW.
IRETON.
Colonel TOMLINSON.

WOMEN.

QUEEN.
Princess ELIZABETH.
Lady FAIRFAX.

SCENE,—*Partly at St James's, and partly at Whitehall.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter Bishop JUXON *and Duke of* RICHMOND.

Jux. Good day, my lord, if, in a time like this,
Aught that is fortunate or good can happen;
When desolation, wedded to despair,
Strides o'er the land, and marks her way with ruin:
Plenty is fled with justice; rage and rapine
Have robb'd the widow'd matron, England, quite,
And left her now no dowry—but her tears.
Rich. Is it then certain that the lawless commons
Have formed a court of justice (so they call it)
To bring the king to trial?
Jux. 'Tis most true;
And though the lords refus'd to join the bill,
Yet they proceed without them. Lawless man!
Whither, at last, will thy impieties,
Thy daring insolence extend, when kings
Feel from a subject-hand the scourge of pow'r?
Where may an injur'd monarch hope for safety,
If he not find it in his people's hearts?
Rich. Oh, Naseby, Naseby, what a deadly stroke
Was thy ill-fated field to royalty!
On thy success depended monarchy;
The fate of rebels and the fate of kings
Hung on thy battle: but thou, faithless too,
Conspir'd with faction to o'erthrow us all,
And bring to sight these more than bloody times.
Jux. To-morrow does the black tribunal sit
When majesty is cited to appear
Before his tyrant subjects. Oh, preposterous!
Is't not as bad as if these rebel hands
Should from their seats tear forth their ruling eyes,
Whose watch directs the body's use and safety?
Rich. It cannot be! 'Tis not in cruelty
To think of spilling royal blood. Mercy, sure,
And the pretended justice of their cause,
Will save them from the weight of so much guilt.
Jux. What added guilt can that black bosom feel,
That has shook off allegiance to its king?
Whole seas of common and of noble blood
Will not suffice; the banquet must be crown'd,
And the brain heated with the blood of kings.
But see where Cromwell comes! upon his brow
Dissimulation stamp'd. If I can judge
By lineament and feature, that man's heart
Can both contrive and execute the worst
And the most daring actions yet conceiv'd.
Ambitious, bloody, resolute and wise,
He ne'er betrays his meaning till he acts,
And ne'er looks out but with the eye of purpose.
His head so cool, that it appears the top
Of Alpine hill, clad with slow-wasting snow;
His execution rapid as the force
Of falling waters thund'ring down its base.
Let us avoid him; for my conscious soul
Fears him in wonder, and in praise condemns him.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter CROMWELL.

Crom. Now through the maze of gloomy policy
Has fire-eyed faction worked her way to light,
And deck'd ambition in the robe of power.
Our fears in Charles's safety are remov'd,
And but one blow remains to fix our state—
The lopping off his head. No more the royal tree
Shall, from legitimacy's root, presume
To sprout forth tyrant branches. Commonwealths
Own no hereditary right, unless our worth
Shine equal to our birth. Wherefore, at once,
Down with nobility—the commons rule!
Avaunt prerogative and lineal title,
And be the right superior merit.

Enter FAIRFAX.

Fair. I was to seek you, sir; some lab'ring doubts,
Which, in the uncertainty of these strange times,
Call for the ray of clearness, make me press
(Perhaps unseasonably) to your ear.
You will forgive the impatience of a man
Who labours to be right—by your example.
Crom. Good Fairfax, spare me; I am ill at words,
And utter badly where I mean respect:
Uncouth my answers are to truth and plainness;
But to a compliment I ne'er could speak:
Yet could you look into my secret mind,
There my soul speaks to Fairfax as to one
Book'd in the fairest page of my esteem,
And written on my heart—But to your doubts.
Fair. You may remember, sir, when first my sword,
My fortune, life, and still, yet more—my honour,
Were all engag'd to fight the cause of justice;
You thought, with me, the wrongs to be redress'd
Were the attempts upon the subjects' right,
The unregarded laws, and bold design
To stretch prerogative to boundless rule.
Design full fair and noble! and th' event
Has crown'd our utmost wishes. England owns
No arbitrary sway; the king's adherents
Are all dispers'd, or the remains so few,
They are not worth a fear; the king himself
In close confinement. Now, let reason judge,
And blend discretion with success.
Let us be just—but let us stop at justice,
Nor by too hasty zeal o'ershoot the mark.
The Roman spirits, savage as they were,

When they determin'd to abolish kings,
Shed not the blood of Tarquin, but expell'd him;
And shall we, owners of the Christian law,
Where mercy shines the foremost attribute,
Be harder to appease? If not more mild,
Let us not be more cruel than barbarians.
Charles grasped, we own, at arbitrary sway,
And would have been a tyrant—for which crime
The kingdoms he was born to we have seiz'd.
But let us not despoil him of his life.
Crowns, as the gift of men, men may resume;
But life, the gift of Heaven, let Heaven dispose of.

Crom. Well have you weigh'd each growing circumstance,
And held discretion in the nicest scale.
Our fears remov'd, the subjects' rights restor'd,
What have we more to do, than to sit down,
And each enjoy the vineyard of his toil?
'Tis true—but yet some clamours are abroad;
Petitions daily crowd the parliament,
That loudly call for justice on the king,
Imputing to his charge the guilt of murders,
The desolation that has bared the land,
And swept the crops of plenty from our fields.

Fair. What, shall the rabble judge—those servile curs,
Who, as they eat in plenty, snarl sedition?
Are these to be regarded?

Crom. You mistake me.
'Tis not their outcries only; but, indeed,
Those who see farther, and with better judgment,
Fear, while he lives, his friends will never die;
But, by some foreign force or home design,
May some time shake the safety of the state.
Besides, they speak of an approv'd good maxim,
Remove the cause, and the effect will cease.
Oh, worthy Fairfax, thou art wise and valiant!
I have seen thee watch occasion, till advantage
Came smiling to thy arms, and crown'd thy patience:
And then, in fight, I have beheld thy sword
Outfly the pace of pestilential air,
And kill in multitudes.

Fair. Good sir, forbear.

Crom. Blush not to hear a truth, when Cromwell speaks it:
By uncouth manner, ill at varnishing,
Beggars my will, and dresses praise uncomely.
Methinks I see thee in the rage of battle,
When Naseby's field confess'd thy victor arm,
And thy decision was the fate of kings.
Methinks I view thee in the bustling ranks,
Where danger was the nearest—(for you brought it)
Unhelm'd, encounter armies, and despise
The safety that the meanest soldier wore;
And when a private man, with bold assertion,
Challeng'd a conquest which your arm had gain'd,
And was reprov'd; methinks, I hear you say,
I have enough of glory, let him own it.

Fair. Whither does all this tend? I pray forbear—
I never fought in hopes to have it told:
The man whose actions speak, expects no answer.

Crom. I do but barely tell thee what thou art,
And what the world may yet expect of Fairfax.
The diamond, merit, in the quarry hid,
Being unknown, unseen, attracts no eyes;
But, digg'd up by the lab'rer's curiosity,
And polished by the hand of gratitude,
It shines the ornament of human life.—
Think therefore what you are, and what this juncture:
The fairest lock of fortune is display'd,
And should be seiz'd on by the bold and worthy.

Fair. You talk in clouds above my purpose quite;
Which was but to enforce the cause of mercy,
And show how much is gain'd by stopping here;
To tell you what my conscience makes opinion,
And strengthen that opinion by your voice.

Crom. 'Tis true indeed—I had forgot myself;
But whither was I hurried in my zeal?
E'en I can descant on a pleasing theme:
Can you forgive me? though 'tis hard indeed:
Exalted virtue can with ease forgive
A calumny, but not a praise.—No more.
Heav'n can witness for me, with what true accord
My thoughts meet yours! how willing I would stop
The arm of violence, and make the law,
Stern as she is, assume a face of smiles.
The death of Charles is far from my design—
And yet the general outcry is for justice:
He has been much to blame, you know he has;
And (but I soften those unruly thoughts)
Were I to speak the dictates of my heart,
I could not find a punishment too great,
To fall upon the man, who should, like Charles,
Forget all right, and waste with lavish hand
The rich revenue of his people's love.

Fair. Dearly he suffers for misguided steps,
And knows that misery he meant to give;
He feels the bondage he design'd for us,
And by the want of freedom counts its value.

Crom. I pity him; and would the commons think with me,
He were as safe as Cromwell; and, brave Fairfax,
We will endeavour it; and may that power,
Whose arm has fought the battle of our cause,
Incline them all to think like you—or me! [*Aside.*
I will about it. Yet remember, Fairfax,
The posture of these times: consider too,
How great your expectations ought to be:
Would Fairfax listen to the voice of Cromwell,
He should have nearer hopes than Charles's life:
Somewhat as great as your desert should crown you,
And make you partner of the highest honours.
[*Exit.*

Fair. The highest honours! what can Cromwell mean?
Acquit me, Heav'n! I fought not but for justice;
Rage fir'd me not, nor did ambition blind;
No party led me, and no interest bound;
My tie was conscience, and my cause was freedom.
When Fairfax listens to another call,
May his next stroke in battle be his last!

Enter IRETON.

Ire. Fairfax, I come, commission'd by the army,
To know your pleasure, if you think it meet
That they should march and quarter nearer London:
The public safety makes it requisite,
But they attend your orders ere they move.

Fair. The public safety! Say what new alarm,
What danger so awakes security,
That in her fright she thus lays hold of caution?

Ire. The safety of the commons, of yourself,
Of the high court of justice; who to-morrow
Against a tyrant proves the people's power,
And brings offending majesty to justice:
This may excite his yet remaining friends,
Arm'd with despair, to some attempt of danger.
Who can be too secure? The man whose pillow
Prevention guards, may sleep in ease and safety.

Fair. To bring offending majesty to justice?

Ire. To the scaffold.

Fair. Ha!

Ire. Why do you start?

Fair. Your zeal too much transports you.
Ireton, farewell—and let me gain belief,
When I affirm this moral to thy ear:—
Conscience than empire more content can bring,
And to be just, is to be more than king. [*Exit.*

Enter CROMWELL.

Crom. It is enough, good kinsman, let him go,
And yet I could well wish that he was ours—
But 'tis no matter—You began to warm,
And the good cause sat burning on thy cheek;
Thou hast a well-turn'd tongue: but list thee, Ireton,
Hear my design (for still my heart is thine)—
The commons most are ours: the weeder's care
Has, from the garden of our enterprize,
Thrown out the rubbish that disgrac'd the soil,
And now our growth looks timely. This you saw,
When by my means a hundred doubted members
Were by the army seiz'd upon their entrance,
And since expell'd the house. Independency
Roots itself fast; while presbytery force
Withers unseen. Would Fairfax had been ours!

Ire. I cannot see that his adherence to us
Could prosper much our cause, or his defection
Make us decline one moment from our purpose.

Crom. You mistake, Ireton: Fairfax stands the first
In interest with the very men I hate:
Therefore his joint endeavour would be found
The easiest means to bring my point to bear;
Besides, he stands the fairest in the love
Of our whole party. Were we link'd together,
The army too were ours; and their keen swords
Are powerful arguments. We shall thrive, however.—
I have it—He shall hence, and on an expedition
Not the most just; I know his squeamish honour,
If it surmise an action the least tainted,
Will throw up this employment: then 'tis mine:
And while I have dame fortune, she shall please me.

Ire. But the main turn of all your enterprise
Hangs on to-morrow, on the death of Charles:
'Tis from his scaffold only you must mount
To what your wishes aim at.

Crom. Fear not that.
I have to do with men, upon whose tempers
I know to work—Those who love piety,
I with the vehemence of prayer encounter,
And through the spirit practise on their passions.
Those who are crafty, I subdue with fraud,
And wile them to my purpose. To the bloody
I promise slaughters, deaths, and executions:
Gold gains the covetous; and praise the proud.
There is another sort—but they are easy;
Your honest men, who never wear distrust;
For honesty's the jaundice of the mind,
That makes us think our neighbours like ourselves:
Let us together. Ireton, here it lies;
When fools believe, wise men are sure to rise.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter FAIRFAX.

Fair. Oh, glory! how deceitful is thy view!
Such are thy charms, that o'er th' uncertain way
Of vice or faction, thou, to hide the danger,
Dost to the outward eye show fair appearance;
Which, when the follower steps on, down he sinks,
And then too late looks backward on the path
Of long neglected virtue.

Enter Lady FAIRFAX.

Lady Fair. My dearest Fairfax, call not this intrusion;
Long has obedience combated with love,
Ere I would press upon your privacy;
If love has conquer'd, love may be forgiven.
The faults of tenderness (if faults they are)
E'en in offending wear the seal of pardon.
Why are you thus alone; and why thus chang'd?

Fair. My gentle lady, thoughts of deep concern,
That to the last recesses of my soul
Travel, with pain and penitence their guides,
At length have found the company they like;
Busy reflection, and moping melancholy,
And silence, the sure guard that keeps the door

Lady Fair. I cannot blame your griefs, but come to share them.
Indeed the cause is just: but, good my lord,
Let not despair take hold of that brave heart,

And boast a conquest which your foes ne'er could.
If (as I long have thought) the king be wrong'd,
Seek to redress, and not lament his fortunes.
I am a woman, not design'd for war;
Yet could this hand (weak as you think its grasp,)
Nerv'd by my heart's companion, resolution,
Display the royal banner in the field,
And shame the strength of manhood in this cause.
Forgive this warmth: I ne'er till now, my lord,
Gave you unask'd my thoughts; but I perceive
Your heart is wounded, and I came to heal it;
To offer you the balm of wholesome counsel,
And temper my persuasion with my love.
Fair. Thou hast been more than I could hope in woman;
Thy beauty thy least excellence. Thou appearest
Like a fair tree, the glory of the plain,
The root thy honour, and the trunk thy friendship,
(That stands the rudest blast of cold adversity),
From whence branch out a thousand different boughs;
Candour, humility, and angel truth,
And every leaf a virtue. True, my love,
While I conceived our liberties in danger,
I fought in their defence; but cannot bear
This bold design upon the life of Charles.
We took up arms to keep the law entire,
Not to defend its open violation.
Lady Fair. I know thy honest heart, it hates a wrong:
'Twas principle, not party, urged thee on
To fight their cause: but Cromwell's specious wiles
Pervert the justice of thy fair designs,
And make thy virtue pander to his will.
Fair. Cromwell has art——but still I think him honest:
Yet in our late discourse his speech, methought,
Appear'd disjointed; and he wav'd the theme
I spoke about—the safety of the king.
At parting too, his words betray'd a purpose
Beyond the limits of a commonwealth;
And talk'd of highest honours—but I hope
That my suspicions wrong him.
Lady Fair. No, my lord;
Rather increase them; keep them still alive
To arm against his black designs: discretion,
At the surmise of danger, wakes incessant;
Nor drops the eyelid till she sleeps in safety.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. The duke of Richmond and a reverend bishop
Desire to see you.
Fair. Wait upon them hither;
I guess at their desires, and would to Heaven
My power could grant them what my wish confirms!
Lady Fair. And wherefore not, my lord? The army yours,
Who can dispute your will? Command them hither,
And be their threats the safety of the king.
Fair. Betray my trust! Thou canst not mean such baseness.
Should I (which much I doubt, for Cromwell's faction
Equals my power, and more, among the soldiers)
Make them revolt, what would my conscience say?
'Twould be a mountain crime, a molehill good.
The whiteness of my fair design to Charles,
Spread o'er the visage of the means that gave it,
Like thinnest lawn upon an Æthiop face,
Would cover, not conceal, the blackness. No, my love,
Virtue and baseness never meet together.

Enter Bishop JUXON *and Duke of* RICHMOND.

Jux. A mournful errand, good my lord of Fairfax,
Makes us thus rude.—My gentle lady, stay;
Your voice will help the music of our plaint,
And swell the notes to moving melody:
Ill-fated Charles, deserted as he is,
Lives in your fair report (or fame has err'd);
Join in our concert, as you are next his heart,
You know to touch the string that sounds to pity.
Fair. My lords, I guess your purpose, and assure you,
If my persuasion or my wish avail,
Charles feels no stroke till nature gives the blow.
Long may the fruit of health adorn the tree,
And ripen with his years in warmer times!
Rich. 'Tis truly spoke, my lord, and worthy Fairfax,
Whom I have still considered in this light;
As nobly just, and but at worst misled.
Jux. How would this man adorn the royal cause,
Who makes rebellion wear the face of virtue!
[*Aside to* RICHMOND.
How I am pleas'd to hear you feel his woe,
And strive for its prevention—let these speak——
[*Weeps.*
These eyes must else have known the dismal office
To see the widow's and the orphan's sorrows;
Complaint had been my language, care my bed,
And contemplation my uneasy pillow.
Now by your hopes of mercy plead this cause;
Know it a labour that will pay itself,
E'en in this world—and when you mount above,
You will behold it of so vast a value,
It will outweigh th' offences of your life.
Fair. Without this intercession, good my lord,
I had done all within my feeble power;
Yet think what outcries din the parliament,
How many zealots call aloud for justice!
Then think what you may hope, and what not fear.
Lady Fair. No matter, Fairfax, 'tis a virtuous cause,
And heaven will bless the purpose with success.
Jux. There Mercy spoke, and in her softest voice:

And Heaven, I doubt not, signs the prophecy.

Enter CROMWELL.

Crom. Indeed! does Fairfax keep such company?
Shame on his pitying heart! his soul's unmann'd,
His resolution dwindled to a girl's:
Now, in the name of fight, is this the man
Whom armies fled from, and whom conquest lov'd?
Behold him now crept to a private corner,
Counting out tears with priests and women.
[*Aside.*

Fair. See
Where Cromwell comes; I will once more assail him,
And be yourselves the witness of his answer.—
Good Cromwell, welcome! And let my petition,
Join'd with these lords, prevail upon your pity;
Let Charles have life: is that so hard a boon?
In lieu of three fair kingdoms, give him life.

Crom. Why this address to me? Am I the parliament?
'Tis they who justly call him to account,
And form this high tribunal.

Jux. Justly, Cromwell!

Crom. Ay, good bishop, justly!
I cry your mercy. By the good old cause!
It is but gratitude in you to plead:
Episcopacy was the rock he split on;
And he has ventured fairly for your lawn:
How learnedly did he uphold your cause,
When Henderson inveigh'd against your mitres!
Did he not write full nobly? Say'st thou, bishop?

Jux. His conscience prompted him to what he did;
His zeal for us can never be forgotten.

Crom. His conscience! you say true—his conscience did it;
He would have stretch'd to arbitrary sway,
And swallow'd down her liberties and laws:
His conscience would have soon digested them.

Fair. Let us not into insult turn our power;
Good fortune is not wedded to our arms:
Conquest, like a young maiden with her lover,
If roughly treated, turns her smiles to frowns,
And hates where once she lov'd.

Crom. I stand corrected.
To me then you apply in Charles's favour,
And wait my answer, which is briefly thus;
I am but one, and (as the weaker must)
Flow in the current of majority:
My single voice, be it against or for,
Avails him little: if the rest incline
To think of mercy and of Charles together,
'Tis fairly done, and e'en to Cromwell's wish:
This is the sum of all I can deliver——
Fairfax, I have matter for your private ear.

Jux. We humbly take our leaves.

Fair. My lords, farewell!
[*Exeunt* JUX. RICH. *and L.* FAIR.

Crom. How can you waste your time on trash like this?
Were Fairfax' honour to be doubted, this might make
The child suspicion grow to certainty;
But we are confident in you: your actions speak.
Yet, Fairfax, do not let thy noble eye
Catch the contagion of weak-judging pity,
And sympathize with beggars. To my purpose:
The council, at whose head your wisdom sits,
Weighing some depositions 'gainst the king,
Would have your judgment's sanction: they request
Your presence there; I bear their will with pleasure.

Fair. It is not needed, sir.
As to the purpose of their meeting, say,
If they incline to mercy, let their charge
Be weaker than it is: but if to rigour,
They have, I fear, too much of that already:
Let them (if friendly Fairfax may advise)
Judge with that candour they expect of Heaven.

Crom. You will not go then?

Fair. Say I cannot go.
My reason pleads against so bad a deed,
And inclination holds me; nay, yet more,
A secret impulse strikes upon my soul,
Which, though I had the will, would yet detain me.

Crom. Folly and superstition! Drive them hence;
And, in exchange, wear honours and renown:
Of this I've said—And, noble Fairfax, believe me,
That when the wind of promise and of hope
Stretches the canvass out of resolution,
The bark, design, flies swift before the gale,
And quickly anchors in good-fortune's bay;
Then we unlade our freight of doubts and fears,
And barter them for happiness and glory. [*Exit.*

Fair. He who embarks himself in Cromwell's ship,
Outsails fair truth and every honest purpose.
'Tis now too plain—How could I doubt so long?
My honesty has made me Cromwell's tool:
His arts have turned my virtue to a sword,
And now 'tis bared against me.
But say, shall Fairfax, whom in open field
An army could not conquer, fall a prey
To the ambitious prospects of one man?
No, Fairfax—rouse up thy resentment's force,
And rescue thy renown from infamy. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Chamber. King CHARLES *discovered reading.*

King. What art thou, life, so dearly lov'd by all?
What are thy charms, that thus the great desire thee,
And to retain thee part with pomp and titles?
To buy thy presence, the gold-watching miser
Will pour his bags of mouldy treasure out,
And grow at once a prodigal. The wretch,
Clad with disease and poverty's thin coat,
Yet holds thee fast, though painful company.
Oh, life! thou universal wish, what art thou?—
Thou'rt but a day——a few uneasy hours:
Thy morn is greeted by the flocks and herds;
And every bird that flatters with its note,
Salutes thy rising sun: thy noon approaching,

Then haste the flies and every creeping insect
To bask in thy meridian; that declining,
As quickly they depart, and leave thy evening
To mourn the absent ray: night at hand,
Then croaks the raven Conscience, time mis-spent;
The owl Despair screams hideous, and the bat
Confusion flutters up and down———
Life's but a lengthened day not worth the waking for.

Enter Queen.

My dearest queen!
I have been summing up the amount of life,
But found no value in it, till you came.
Queen. Do not perplex yourself with thoughts like those:
Ill-fortune at the worst, returns to better;
At least we think so, as it grows familiar.
King. No, I was only arming for the worst.
I have try'd the temper of my inmost soul,
And find it ready now for all encounters.
Death cannot shake it.
Queen. Do not talk of death:
The apprehension shakes my tender heart;
Ages of love, I hope, are yet to come,
Ere that black hour arrives: such chilling thoughts
Disgrace the lodging of that noble breast.
King. What have I not to fear, thus close confin'd,
To-morrow forc'd to trial? Will those men,
Who insolently drag me to the bar,
Stop in the middle of their purpose? No.
I must prepare for all extremities:
And (be that Power ador'd that lends me comfort)
I feel I am.——Oh, do not weep, my queen!
Rather rejoice with me, to find my thoughts
Outstretch the painful verge of human life,
And have no wish on earth—but thee! 'Tis there
Indeed I feel: peace and resignation
Had wander'd o'er the rooms of every thought,
To shut misfortune out, but left this door
Unclos'd, through which calamity
Has enter'd in thy shape to seize my heart.
Queen. Be more yourself, my lord; let majesty
Take root within thy heart, nor meanly bend
Before ill-fortune's blast.
King. Oh, doubt me not!
'Tis only on the side where you are plac'd,
That I can know a fear. For Charles's self,
Let fierce encounter with the sword of danger
Bring him to bloodiest proof; and if he shrinks,
Despise him. Here, I glory in my weakness.
He is no man whom tenderness not melts,
And love so soft as thine. Let us go in.
And if kind Heaven design me longer stay
On this frail earth, I shall be only pleas'd,
Because I have thy presence here to crown me.
But if it destines my immediate end,
(Hard as it is, my queen, to part with thee),
I say, farewell, and to the blow resign,
That strikes me here—to make me more divine.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter CROMWELL *and* BRADSHAW.

Crom. It shall be better, Bradshaw: do not think
Desert, though lowly plac'd, escapes our eye;
To me it is as precious in the valley,
As glittering on the mountain's top:——
I praise myself that I have found thee out:
'Tis not my favour, Bradshaw, but thy worth
Brings thee to light; thou dost not owe me aught.
Now, Bradshaw, art thou our high president.
Thou hast a heart well tempered to the cause:
Thou look'st on monarchy in a true light,
And where the cause is just wilt shut out pity.
Pity!
The fool's forgiveness and the mother's tear,
The indiscretion of the unpractis'd maid,
Who through that organ hears her lover's plaint,
And listens to her ruin.
Brad. My good sir,
Think not of Bradshaw thus. My soul is firm;
The melting eye and the relenting heart
Ne'er wrong'd my resolution. As to kings,
To monarchy, and to superior state,
That I disclaim'd; till your exalted merit
Alter'd my purpose in my own despite,
And, when I meant to level, rais'd you high.
Crom. Spoke in a hearty zeal for our good cause.
That I have the same thoughts of thee, let this,
Thy present weighty office, speak, which should,
If Cromwell's nature bent to partiality,
Have fallen upon my kinsman, Ireton; one
Of good regard, and hearty in the service:
But Cromwell's heart points only to desert,
The north of all his purpose. Thou art ours;
And though thy modesty at first declin'd
To sit our head, and lead our counsels right,
Yet I determined not to lose thy worth,
If importunity could win it.
Brad. True, sir;
I own I thought myself unequal to it,
Nor am I yet convinc'd; yet what I want in merit,
I will make out in rigour on the king,
In justice to the people and to Heaven.
Crom. Bradshaw,
Thou art the very sinew of our cause;
The spirit of design and warmth of zeal
Glow in thy purpose. I adore that man,
Who, once resolv'd, outflies e'en expedition.
Thou art the glory of our brotherhood!
And spare not to reproach, to taunt and blacken,

T' insult their party; nay, the king himself;
Mindful that all his dignity is lost,
And he for monstrous crime brought forth to justice.
Seek an occasion too to talk with Fairfax,
And urge to him the strong necessity
Of the king's death—Perhaps he may prove angry—
But do not thou regard it. The time presses;
And thou hast liv'd too long to squander that.
Brad. Good sir, farewell! my love would offer more.
But my haste wrongs it. [*Exit.*
Crom. Go to, Bradshaw.—
Such are the tools with which the wise must work:
And yet he too is wise, and might cajole
A weaker than himself, and does.
He is my proper instrument
To operate on those below my notice.
Thus by comparison are all things known;
And by such under-steps as him, and lower,
Do the ambitious mount to fame and honour.
Besides, I choose me those whom zeal inflames,
Who failing to convince you, will compel:
Such, prompted by enthusiasm's force,
And in predestination's armour cas'd,
Will to the mouth of danger plant their breasts,
And out-fight phrenzy and despair. But lo,
Where Ireton comes!

Enter IRETON.

My trusty friend,
What looks wears our design?
Ire. Such as a bride,
The morning after bliss; she smiles upon us,
And laughs at what she fears. Petitions call
For justice on the king—Our faction thrives;
Murmur increases to a public outcry.
All are 'gainst Charles, save a few pitying hearts,
Who melt with Fairfax, and incline to mercy.
Crom. 'Tis well. Send post unto the army, Ireton,
And let those sums of money I have ordered
Be secretly dispers'd among the soldiers;
It will remind them of their promises:
Gold is specific for the memory.
O gold! wer't not for thee, what great design,
What bold ambition, that outstretches justice,
Could have success! Thou buy'st our very prayers:
Thou art the head of opposition,
And the tooth of faction. Wer't not for thy aid,
Success would vary like th' uncertain wind,
And honesty might prosper. Hie thee, Ireton;
I must to the king; I have some bills to offer him,
Which, for the life of Charles, Charles would not sign:
And his refusal turns to our advantage.
Thou shalt know more hereafter—Now dispatch.
Ire. Good sir, I fly. [*Exit.*
Crom. Ha! whom have we yonder?
O, 'tis the wife of Fairfax! once as hearty,
As zealous for the cause, as Cromwell's self,
And wrought her lord to think so. Now, O woman!
Such is thy varying nature, that the waves
Are not more fluctuating than thy opinions,
Nor sooner are displac'd. To her is owing
The wayward pity of her vassal lord.
Oh, 'tis certain danger to have such a woman,
Who, when man leaves himself to toy with her,
Knows how to win, and practise on his weakness.
But let me think—All women may be won.
The dame of Ephesus, the Anne of Richard,
Show us a woman's grief and resolution.
Why may not she be wrought up to my purpose?
I can approach in what they like, in flattery.

Enter Lady FAIRFAX.

Lady Fair. Stay, worthy Cromwell, and attend my prayer—
Hear me—and may thy answer be propitious,
As this kind hour that favours my address!
O may my falling tears, that plead for mercy,
Drop on thy heart, and melt it to compliance,
Nor disregard the suit because a woman's!
Cromwell is noble; and the noble soul
Grants the most free indulgence to the weak,
Because its generous nature pleads their cause.
Crom. Such is a woman's weakness, that she thinks
T' impose on us by what allures herself:
But I must turn this project upon her,
And fairly put it to an equal proof,
Who best dissembles, Cromwell—or a woman. [*Aside.*
Lady, I must esteem a compliment,
When from a tongue that seldom errs that way.
From what I know, and what I oft have heard,
You can dress praise like truth: that praise I mean,
Which, from our liking to the theme we speak of,
Swells to extravagance, (though still our thoughts)—
Such warmth is virtue's fault; and such, I hope,
May be your kind excuse for praising me.
Lady Fair. Talk not of praise, good sir, your merit shames it,
When from a woman's mouth.
Crom. Well turn'd again!— [*Aside.*
O lady, were I but to speak my thoughts
Of you, and your brave lord, you would conclude
'Twere praise indeed—for virtue looks within
For her faults only, not for her perfections.
Hear some of those: you once espous'd our cause,
E'en with persuasion's warmth; and well you sued.
We have not, sure, o'erlook'd desert so far,
To merit opposition!
The state is busy—but the time will come,
When her best office shall be pleasing you.
Lady Fair. You mock me, sir; I do not wish that time,
Vain as you think my sex. I came to say——

Crom. E'en to that purpose, to the life of Charles.
It cannot be; the people cry for justice:
Would I could stop its course! But, gentle lady,
Think it more wise to fly a falling pile,
Than strive to prop its ruin. Charles must die.
Lady Fair. O gracious Cromwell!——
Crom. Nay, but hear me on.
Why will you thus employ your eloquence,
Which our whole council would with liking hear,
To help impossibilities? Good lady,
Rather employ it (and you know the way)
To teach your lord to value rising fortune,
And make his fame——
Lady Fair. As black as yours will be.
Shame on thy dark designs, and the whole cause,
If only such a deed can make it prosper!
Be the heart bloodless that conceives the act,
The tongue accurst that dares avow the purpose,
And the hand blasted that obeys the order!
May his life here be all the hell we think of,
Yet find a greater in the other world! [*Exit.*
Crom. How wayward and perverse a thing is woman!
How much unlike the softness we expect,
When rage and trifles vex them! In the heat
And the full vigour of their first enjoyment,
Distrust succeeds their love; and he who pleases
Is hunted by their jealousy to hate.—
Fairfax and Bradshaw earnest in dispute!
I will not interrupt them, but to Charles. [*Exit.*

Enter FAIRFAX *and* BRADSHAW.

Brad. Why all this heat, my lord—because I said
That Charles deserves to die? Why, I repeat it:
And would you master this unmanly rage,
I might to reason prove it, but not phrenzy.
Fair. Well, I am calm—speak out your bloody purpose,
What hell devises, and what Bradshaw thinks.
Brad. Cast your eye backward, then, and let us view
E'en the beginning of this Charles's reign:
In the first year a raging plague destroy'd us,
And was prophetic of our woes to come:
Did it not sweep whole multitudes away,
Fast as the sword, which Charles has since unsheath'd?
Did he not follow still his father's steps,
Retain his ministry, pursue his aims?
Would he, though pray'd and threatened by the parliament,
Give up those men whose counsels had misled him?
And is not that prince weak—to say no more—
Who from a general outcry guards the man
Whose bold ambition strikes at liberty,
At native freedom, and the subjects' right?
Fair. You but this moment blam'd my warmth,
And art thyself transported.
Brad. Grant I be;
'Tis in the cause that liberty approves,
And every honest Englishman must own it;
But to proceed—Those men he still held fast,
Or parted with them, as the heart drops blood:
Witness the earl of Strafford: tax'd the land
By grievous impositions; levy'd war
Against the commons, and the kingdom's peace.
But I forget me that I speak to Fairfax,
Who has so often fought against his arms,
And taught success to know the cause of right.
Fair. I fought for reparation of our wrongs—
But cannot think that it consists in murder.
I would not have him die.
Brad. By the good cause,
It does portend some more than common change,
When generals plead for mercy! Shame it hence,
And let your visage wear the glow of rage;
Let Prynn's undaunted soul inform thy breast,
And drive weak pity thence.
Fair. I'll hear no more:
Thy servile tongue may spare its hireling office;
It roots my purpose firmer: in thy speech
I read design, though oratory's flowers
Strive to conceal the rancour of the heart.
O eloquence! thou violated fair,
How art thou woo'd, and won to either bed
Of right or wrong! O, when injustice folds thee,
Dost thou not curse thy charms for pleasing him,
And blush at conquest? But the juncture calls;
Nor will I leave one moment unemploy'd,
Till the king's safety be confirm'd. [*Exit.*
Brad. 'Tis well.
I must to other folk, here time is lost.
This man has stepp'd into the stream of mischief,
Just like the boy, who tries the water's cold,
And shrinking pulls his foot to land: men, like me,
Plunge boldly in, and weather to their point. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The King's Apartment.*

Enter King and Bishop JUXON.

Jux. Why does your highness seem so lost in thought?
Consider not so deeply, good my lord.
King. The purport of my dream this afternoon
Has set this visage on. I'll tell thee, Juxon,——
Finding my spirits faint, I laid me down,
And courted sleep to ease me: to my wish,
It quickly seiz'd my eye-lids; and methought
(So fancy painted) former times return'd,
Grandeur encircled me, and regal state;
My people's love flew round about my throne,
On acclamation's wing; 'twas glory all,
And such a reign as Charles has pray'd for. Homage,
The bond of friendship, and the oath of trust,
Were all before me: straight the pleasing scene,
Quick as the fearful eye can wink, was chang'd;
And in its room, a vast and dreary plain,
Comfortless, wild, without inhabitant,
Stretch'd out a dismal length that tir'd the eye;
I was about to go, when kind Adversity
Pull'd me behind, and, as I turn'd around,
Shew'd me where Innocence stood weeping by;
He whisper'd in my ear, that she alone

Of all my boasting friends had staid with me.
The thought struck deep; I wak'd, and, good my lord,
I found my weeping queen within my arms.

Enter CROMWELL.

Crom. If I disturb you, sir, I ask your pardon:
Necessity will sometimes be importunate,
And outgo compliment.
King. Your business, sir?
Crom. Know, then, whatever may be thought of Cromwell,
He pays this visit to approve his love,
His fair design and honesty of heart
To Charles—Solicitous to bring you good,
Behold two bills, in tenor much the same
With those before presented; I presume,
The eye in danger more distinctly sees,
Freed from security's thick film: these sign'd,
Rigour may break her sword, and concord join us.
King. Can the low peasant mount his thoughts with kings?
The servile judge of all men by themselves.
But know, mistaken man, the noble mind
Rises above distress; and terms, perhaps,
Which in the day of power I might accept,
Must be refus'd in this: but these can never.
There is no good that equals the exchange
Of peaceful thoughts, and an untainted mind.
Crom. Where were those thoughts in Charles's former days,
When to despotic sway you stretch'd your view,
And would have pull'd up laws? when to that end
You so caress'd your fav'rite Buckingham,
The tool of your designs? What were your thoughts,
When, from the fair impeachment of the public,
You shelter'd up that monster minister,
And hid him in the bosom of your fondness?
Jux. Insolent Cromwell! know to whom thou speak'st;
Think what a distance Heaven has set between you,
And be your words as humble as your state.
Crom. Distance! good bishop! but I cry you mercy;
For thus the clergy will still argue on,
Deny from pique, assert from prejudice;
Show us the lesson, seldom the example,
And preach up laws which they will ne'er obey.
But thou art trash below the note of Cromwell:
To thee I speak, protector of black Buckingham!
What must that monarch be, who lets one man
Ingross the offices of place and power,
Who, with the purloin'd money of the state,
Buys popularity, and whose careless eye
Sees our fair trade destroy'd by corsair force,
And pirates violence; who merchandises trusts,
And highest posts—and whose unbounded pow'r
Does on his worthless kindred lavish titles?
King. Were I the person that thy malice speaks,
I should deserve this treatment. Thy base charge
Strikes at my honesty as king and man,
And forces me to answer. Well I know
That for my actions here, to Heaven alone
I stand accountable: yet stooping thus,
(Low as to thee) I thus avow my justice.
Have I not still maintain'd the subjects' rights,
Preserv'd religion pure; nay, struggled for it,
E'en to this hour, the witness of thy insolence?
What would your faction have? If monarchy,
Must I not govern by the acts of state?
I am a monarch else without a council.
Would you reduce the state to anarchy?
You are a council then without a power.
Crom. You feel our power, as slightly as you term it.
King Such as a robber's, by surprise and force:
Where is your right from Heaven?
Crom. Power;
The right of nature and the free-born man.
King. Leave me.
Crom. You speak as if you still were king.
King. If not, what am I then?
Crom. Charles Stuart, nothing more.
King. Well may the servile herd insult and threaten,
When they behold the lion in the toils.
Crom. You may complain as much as suits your will,
You've still that comfort left—So fare you well.
[*Exit.*
Jux. Thus is good fortune treated by the base:
O, did she know how much they shame her favours,
She would confer them only on the great!
Be cheerful, sir; he is not worth a thought.
King. O Juxon! think what majesty must feel,
Who bears an insult from a subject tongue:
But let him hence—I am composed again,
And for the worst prepar'd. All-gracious Heaven!
You gave me power, and you may take it back;
You gave me life, and may reclaim the gift;
That as you please—but spare this luckless land,
And save it from misfortune's rugged hand!
My every wish is for its joys' increase,
And my last prayer shall be my people's peace.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter King CHARLES, *the Queen, and Lady* FAIRFAX.

Queen. Is it like love thus to persuade me hence?
Is it like love, alas! in me to go?
Can she be faithful to her luckless lord,
Who will be absent in affliction's hour?
Is it not then the lenient hand of love
Proves its best office? Then the virtuous wife
Shines in the full meridian of her truth,
And claims her part of sorrow: O, my lord,
Have I been so unthrifty of thy joy,
That you deny me to partake your woe?

King. No, my best queen—you wrong my heart's design.
'Tis not my wish advises—but my fear,
My fears for thee, the tenderest part of Charles:
When thou art safe beyond their barbarous power,
I cannot feel misfortune.

Queen. But I shall,
More than to share e'en death with thee:——
My sorrows will be doubled if I go:——
The pangs of separation must be great,
And my conceit of what my Charles may feel
Exceed reality.——O let me stay——
I was prepar'd to suffer all things with you,
But not the shock of parting.

Lady Fair. Welcome, tears!
Who that have virtue can behold this scene,
And not be actors in it?

King. Now 'tis past.
I would have sooner spoke, but powerful nature
First claim'd my tears, ere she would lend me words:
It must not be, my love; thy prayer to stay
(The growing proof of thy eternal love)
Argues against thee to my tender heart,
And forces thee away: this worthy lady
Has found the means, and made the generous offer,
Her care prepares your flight: the present hour,
That forces me before their black tribunal,
Will hold all eyes regardless of your steps,
And make security thy guide:——farewell!
Till we shall meet again, thy dear idea
Shall in my waking fancy still revive,
And fill up every dream.

Queen. My dearest lord,
Can you so easily pronounce——farewell,
When that farewell may be perhaps—for ever?
O can you leave me thus?——
Methinks our parting should affect the world,
And nature sympathize with grief like ours——
O let me stay, at least, till this black day
Be past, that I may know the worst!
To be in doubt is worse than to be certain;
My apprehensions will increase my woe,
And bring the blackest scenes of death before me.

King. No more, my queen! that were to risk thy safety,
And make me more unhappy in thy danger:
Farewell.

Queen. O, yet a little longer!
Each moment now is worth an age before.
Thou never-resting time! 'tis only now
I count thy value. O, my dearest lord!
Who could believe, when first we met in love,
That we should know a parting worse than death?
Do not go yet.

King. Heaven knows I would not go——
But dire necessity must be obey'd:
And see where he appears in his worst form.
Keep in thy tears, my love, lest he suspects——
And teach thy heart to say farewell at once.

Enter Colonel TOMLINSON.

Tom. My lord, I have orders to attend your majesty
To Westminster.

King. A moment spent in private,
And I am ready. [*Exit* TOM.
Do not droop, my queen!
Exert the strongest vigour of thy soul,
Call up thy piety, thy awful virtue,
Thy resolution, and thy sex's pride,
And take their friendly counsel; they will soon
Determine you to think of Charles, as one
Beyond the power of faction in this world,
And ready for another—Fare thee well;
I have this compliment to pay thy worth,
That now I leave thee with more tender thoughts
Than first I met thy love—this tear—adieu!
Now, sir, lead on. [*To Col.* TOM. *entering.*

Queen. O stay, my dearest lord!
[*Exeunt King and Col.* TOM.
Let me assure thee of my faith and love——
Witness, thou awful Ruler of the world,
How much I feel in parting—how my heart
Labours to break to prove its constancy;
How my affection still has call'd thee dear;
Never unkind till in this parting moment.
What do I say? Alas! my Charles is gone——
Fancy presented him before my eyes,
And my tears wrong'd my sight—he's gone for ever.

Lady Fair. Good madam, think your safety calls upon you;
Your very sorrows are not here secure;
Though you neglect your own, yet think his ease,
The ease of Charles, depends upon your flight;
I have provided every proper means,
They wait your will.——

Queen. Kind lady, I will go——
But oh, be just to nature, and to pity,
And own 'tis hard—I thank your friendly tears,
They speak my meaning—but I weary you——

The wretch who feels misfortunes will complain,
And I have wond'rous reason—O, my Charles!
Since I must go, may every adverse star
Dart on my wand'ring head, and leave thy sky
Deck'd with propitious planets only!—May thy life,
Clear as thy innocence, adorn the world,
And be the theme of wonder!—O my heart!
[*Exeunt.*

Enter Marquis of LINDSEY, *meeting the Duke of* RICHMOND.

Lind. Saw you the king pass by?
Rich. I did, my lord,
As to his coronation, not his trial;
Such was his look—such awful majesty
Beam'd out on every side, and struck the gazer.
No mark of sorrow furrow'd up his face,
Nor stopp'd his smiles to his saluting friends;
Clear as his conscience was his visage seen,
The emblem of his heart. As I approach'd,
Richmond, said he, commend me to my friends;
Say, though my power is gone, my wishes reach them,
And every prayer that rises, breathes their welfare;
'Tis not in faction to subdue the spirit,
Or break the noble mind.—His speaking eyes
Repeated his commands, and pierc'd my heart:
E'en the base rabble, licens'd to insult,
Struck with the dignity of kingly awe,
Forgot their hire, and rose from praise to wonder.
Lind. Will you not follow, sir? 'twere worth remark,
How he deports himself.
Rich. O fear not Charles:
Let him encounter with a host of kings,
And he shall stand the shock without a terror:
Will he then shrink beneath a subject-brow,
Though wrinkled with rebellion?—No, good Lindsey,
The lion cannot lose his kingly nature,
The sun its heat, nor Charles his noble firmness:
Perhaps, indeed, his generous heart may feel,
Not for himself, but for his tyrant judges;
He may lament deprav'd humanity,
And blush to be mistaken in his people.
See, what a mournful visage Fairfax wears,
The sun of pleasantry eclips'd by thought:
Now judgment combats inadvertency,
And makes him curse success—but thus 'tis ever
When courage wildly starts out by itself,
Nor asks consideration's friendly aid;
Confusion joins him; then he wanders through
The thickest doubt, the maze perplexity,
And finds at last repentance.

Enter FAIRFAX.

Fair. Now the scene
Of bloodiest purpose is on foot, and acting!
Now murder mounts the bench, array'd like justice,
And points the sword at Charles—ill-fated man!
Ha! who are those! the friends of Cromwell's faction?
No, they are wit their huntsmen on the scent
Of royal blood, uncoupled for destruction.——
If sorrow blinds me not——the duke of Richmond.
Rich. Good sir, how fare you?
Fair. Wondrous ill, my lord.
Could I but tell you what I feel, yet live,
You would conclude me danger-proof——O, sir,
Reflection shows me the vast tract I've pass'd,
And stern impossibility denies
One step return—yet, be my witness Heav'n,
This dreadful day was never in my wish.
Rich. We do not think it was. But, gentle lord,
Think of some means to ward this fatal blow,
And save the king. Would you but go, my lord,
Your struggle might——
Fair. Alas! what can I do?
Was ever army routed by one man?
I have an army there to combat with.
Should I go there in order for prevention,
Failing, my presence would be made consent,
And I still more unhappy. O the change!
This is the change of independent power,
For presbytry ne'er meant it. Yet, my lords,
You shall not say, that Fairfax only talks;
He will approve his honesty by deeds;
Somewhat he will attempt to save his honour,
And clear it to the view of future times.
Rich. We do not doubt your will, nor yet your power.
My lord, farewell. [*Exeunt* RICH. *and* LIND.
Fair. My power!——say, what is power?
The vain extent of title and of land;
The barbarous impulse to th' insulting wretch,
To use his fellow-creature like a slave;
The woman's idol, and the man's misfortune,
As it too often robs him of humanity.
This is the worst degree——behold the best,
And now 'tis lovely: the redress of wrongs,
Hunger's repast, and the large draught of thirst,
The poor man's riches, and the rich man's wealth,
When thus apply'd—The means to stop the death,
The death of Charles——This is my wish for power. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Draws and discovers the High Court. King, BRADSHAW, CROMWELL, IRETON, *&c.*

King. Sir, were my person all the danger here,
I should not think it worth the pain of speech:
Your charge 'gainst me is of the smallest force;
But 'tis my people's liberties I prize,
At which through me you strike. Impeachments run
In the king's name, and therefore cannot lie
Against the king himself; what earthly power
Can justly call me to account? by what law
Have you erected this pretended court?——
The house of commons?—Say, is that alone
A court of judicature? Where are the lords
To lend their aid? the king to sit supreme,
And pass the nation's laws? Are these your means
To bring the king to meet his parliament?

To force him hither like a criminal?
I lately did require, and press'd it warmly,
Stoop'd almost to entreaty, to be heard
Before both houses in the Painted Chamber;
I told you what I had to offer there
Concern'd the kingdom's safety more than mine:
I was refus'd——Is this your boasted justice?
Consider of it yet—and hear your king:
If you do not, remember where it lies,
The weight of this day's guilt; if you refuse—
Do as you please——I have no more to say.

Brad. The court has something then to say to you,
Which, though it may not please you, must be spoke.
You have been charg'd with tyranny and murder,
With levying arms against the commonwealth,
And joining in rebellion 'gainst the people.

King. Sir, give me leave to speak, ere sentence passes,
Against those imputations.

Brad. By your favour,
Your time is past, and sentence now approaching.

King. Am I not to be heard?

Brad. 'Tis now too late;
You have disown'd us for a court of justice;
We have too long been trifled with already,
And must proceed.—Attend your sentence, sir:
The commons, in behalf of the whole people,
Have constituted this high court of justice,
To try Charles Stuart, lately king of England.
He has thrice heard his charge, and thrice denied
The power and jurisdiction of the court;
For which contempt, and proof of his high crimes,
It does pronounce him tyrant, traitor, murderer,
Adjudging him to death, by severing
His head and body.——This is the joint act,
The sentence, judgment, and the resolution
Of the whole court.

[*The whole Court rises in token of their assent.*

King. Will you hear me, sir?

Brad. Not after sentence.

King. No, sir?

Brad. It is too late. Withdraw your prisoner.

King. May I not speak?—I may, sir, after sentence.
Your favour, sir, I may, sir, after sentence.

Brad. Adjourn the court.

[*The King is brought forward; the scene closes.*

King. Denied to speak!—Why have I lived to this?
When I had power, the meanest of my subjects
Not heard by me, would straight arraign my justice,
And brand me with the hated name of tyrant.
Will future ages, looking back to this,
Credit the record? They will rather deem it
The black invective of a partial pen,
And curse his memory that libell'd England.
Sir, I am ready to attend your will,
Do your worst office; if 'tis your commission,
Then lead me down this instant to the block;
'Twill be a joyful hearing; for, believe me,
I would not live in longer fellowship
With men, whom my best thoughts must call ungrateful.

Tom. Sir, my commands are to attend you back;
I have no more in charge.

King. I follow you.

[*As he goes out,* FAIRFAX *enters.*

Fair. Sir, let me trespass for a word or two,
Ere you remove your prisoner. [*To* TOM.

Tom. I obey, sir.

King. Your pleasure, sir? If you come here to insult,
Spare not the taunt, nor the opprobrious smile:
I have to-day already borne so much,
That an addition will be scarcely felt.

Fair. Wrong me not so; I bear a fairer purpose:
My heart, detesting this accursed day,
Comes to approve its honesty to Charles:
If I have often fought against thy arms,
My conscience dictated, and not my hate:
Acquit me to thyself of this last act,
And judge the former as you please.

King. Good Fairfax,
The present times are liable to error,
I am a fatal instance; then forgive me.
I had forgot how lately I had cause
To think you now no enemy to Charles;
But sorrow forc'd down her lethargic draught,
Which had clos'd up the eye of memory.

Fair, Ill-fated prince! how does thy firmness shine,
And make affliction glorious! Oh, 'tis thus
The truly great exert their resolution,
And make calamity a virtue. Cromwell now
Loses the barbarous joy of his design,
To see misfortune's arrow fail to pierce thee.

King. Believe me, Fairfax, 'tis not innate firmness,
The dame morality, the Stoic patience,
That furnish true serenity of mind:
I had try'd all these helps, but prov'd them weak,
And found the best philosophy in virtue.
Can the fond teacher's lesson, conn'd by rote,
Change the dark lodging of the murderer's breast
To the sun-lighted rooms of innocence? Oh, no!
As to the agents of my present fate,
I look upon them with the eye of thanks;
Who from this life of sorrow wing my parting,
And send me sooner to an happier throne.

Fair. Such resignation wears the noble mind,
And triumphs over death: but, gentle Charles!
Think not of death so soon; live long and happy.
Fairfax will try his utmost stretch of power,
But you shall live, though this black day has happen'd;
Persuasion, prayer, and force, shall all be us'd,
To make my promise good.

King. Good Fairfax, hear me;
Nor indiscreetly throw thyself away,
To save the man whose wishes are to die.
I had remov'd my thoughts from earth, and now
'Twill be such pain to call them back again——

Life is not worth the trouble: yet I thank thee.
Fair. This was but half my purpose: hear me on—
If, in the hurry of intemperate zeal,
I have outgone the justice of my cause,
And, erring in my judgment, fought in wrong,
Let this entreaty win thee to a pardon.
King. If to have my forgiveness makes thee clear,
Thou art as white as virtue.
Fair. Glorious Charles!—
But I will hasten to preserve his life,
And make my gratitude my thanks; farewell.
It is the common interest of mankind
To let him live, to shine out an example.
King. Who dresses in good fortune's gorgeous ermine,
Looks not so comely to a virtuous eye,
As he who clothes him in repentant black.
I tire your patience. Come, sir, lead the way.
Lighter than fancy does my bosom feel,
My thoughts are mercy, and my quiet conscience
Tranquillity's still calm: no anxious fear
Beats in my pulse, or ruffles me with care:
If the bare hope of immortality
Knows peace like this, what must the full enjoyments be! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter FAIRFAX.

Fair. Why did I conquer——to repent of conquest!
Who, though I fought for liberty alone,
Will yet acquit me of the guilt that follows?
Will future ages, when they read my page,
(Though Charles himself absolves me of the deed)
Spare me the name of regicide? Oh, no!
I shall be blacken'd with my party's crimes,
And damn'd with my full share, though innocent.
In vain then 'gainst oppression have I warr'd,
In vain for liberty uprear'd the sword;
Posterity's black curse shall brand my name,
And make me live in infamy for ever.
Now, valour, break thy sword! thy standard, victory!
Furl up thy ensigns, bold hostility,
And sink into inaction; since, alas!
One tainted heart, or one ambitious brain,
Can turn the current of the noblest purpose,
And spoil the trophies of an age's war.
But see where, to my wish, stern Cromwell comes;
Now urge him strongly for the life of Charles,
And, if entreaty fails, avow thy purpose.

Enter CROMWELL.

Crom. Fairfax in thought! My noble lord, good day.
Fair. To make it good, let Cromwell grant my prayer,
So mercy and the sun shall shine together.
Crom. Still on this paltry subject! Fairfax, why,
Why will you wrong entreaty by this cause?
Fairfax is wise, and should not ask of Cromwell
To grant what justice stops; yours are not years
When childhood prattles, or when dotage mopes:
Pardon the expression.
Fair. I forgive you all,
All you can think, but rigour to the king.
Crom. Pr'ythee no more: this mercy that you pray for,
As ill becomes the tongue as my severity;
Nay, worse. Would you obstruct the law
In its due office? nor permit the axe
To fall upon offenders such as Charles?
Would you see tyranny again arise,
And spread in its foundation? Let us then
Seize on our general, Liberty, who still
Has in the front of battle fought our cause,
And led us on to conquest; let us bind him
In the strong chains of rough prerogative,
And throw him helpless at the feet of Charles:
He will absolve us then, and praise our folly.
Fair. This is a sophistry too weak for reason:
You would excuse the guilt of Charles's death,
By shewing me the opposite extreme;
But can you find no mean, no middle course,
Steering between the danger of the last,
And horror of the first? I know you can.
Crom. It is not to be done: would Fairfax now,
When he has labour'd up the steep ascent,
And wasted time and spirits; would he now,
When but one step exalts him to the summit,
Where to his eye the fair horizon stretches,
And every prospect greatness can command;
Would he now stop, let go his fearful hold,
And tumble from the height?
Fair. I aim at none;
Damn'd be all greatness that depraves the heart,
Or calls one blush from honesty!—No more——
I shall grow warm to be thus trifled with:
Think better, Cromwell——I have given my promise
That Charles shall live.
Crom. A promise may be broke;
Nay, start not at it—'Tis an hourly practice;
The trader breaks it—yet is counted honest;
The courtier keeps it not—yet keeps his honour;
Husband and wife in marriage promise much,
Yet follow separate pleasures, and are—virtuous.
The churchmen promise too, but, wisely, they
To a long payment stretch the crafty bill,
And draw upon futurity. A promise!
'Tis the wise man's freedom, and the fool's restraint;
It is the ship in which the knave embarks,
Who rigs it with the tackle of his conscience,

And sails with every wind: regard it not.
Fair. Can Cromwell think so basely as he speaks?
It is impossible; he does but try
How well fair speech becomes a vicious cause,
But, I hope, scorns it in the richest dress.
Yet hear me on—it is our interest speaks,
And bids us spare his life: while that continues,
No other title can annoy our cause,
And him we have secure; but grant him dead,
Another claim starts up, another king,
Out of our reach——This bloody deed perhaps
May rouse the princes of the continent
(Who think their persons struck at in this blow)
To shake the very safety of our cause.
Crom. When you consult our int'rest, speak with freedom;
It is the turn and point of all design.
But take this answer, Fairfax, in return;
Britain, the queen of isles, our fair possession,
Secur'd by nature laughs at foreign force;
Her ships her bulwark, and the sea her dyke,
Sees plenty in her lap, and braves the world.
Be therefore satisfied; for Charles must die.
Fair. Wilt thou be heard, though at thy utmost need,
Who now art deaf to mercy and to prayer?
Oh, curs'd ambition, thou devouring bird,
How dost thou from the field of honesty
Peck every grain of profit and delight,
And mock the reaper, virtue! Bloody man!
Know that I still have power, have still the means
To make that certain which I stoop to ask;
And fix myself against thy black design,
And tell thee, dauntless, that he shall not die.
Crom. Will Fairfax turn a rebel to the cause,
And shame his glories?
Fair. I abjure the name;
I know no rebel on the side of virtue.
This I am sure of, he that acts unjustly,
Is the worst rebel to himself; and though now
Ambition's trumpet and the drum of power
May drown the sound, yet conscience will, one day,
Speak loudly to him, and repeat that name.
Crom. You talk as 'twere a murder, not a justice.
Have we not brought him to an open trial?
Does not the general cry pronounce his death?
Come, Fairfax dares not——
Fair. By yon heaven, I will——
I know thee resolute: but so is Fairfax.
You see my purpose, and shall find I dare.
[*Going.*
Crom. Fairfax, yet stay. I would extend my power
To its full stretch, to satisfy your wish;
Yet would not have you think that I should grant
That to your threats, which I deny'd your prayer—
Judge not so meanly of yourself and me.
Be calm and hear me——What is human nature,
When the intemperate heat of passion blinds
The eye of reason, and commits her guidance
To headlong rashness? He directs her steps
Wide of success to error's pathless way,
And disappointments wild; yet such we are,
So frail our being, that our judgment reaches
Scarce farther than our sight——let us retire,
And, in this great affair, entreat his aid,
Who only can direct to certainty.
There is I know not what of good presage,
That dawns within, and lights to happy issue.
Fair. If heaven and you consider it alike,
It must be happy.
Crom. An hour or two of pray'r
Will pull down favour upon Charles and us.
Fair. I am contented; but am still resolv'd
That Charles shall live——I shall expect your answer
With the impatience of desiring lovers,
Who swell a moment's absence to an age. [*Exit.*
Crom. This was a danger quite beyond my view,
Which only this expedient could prevent.
Fairfax is weak in judgment; but so brave,
That, set determination by his side,
And he ascends the mountain top of peril.
Now time is gain'd to ward against his power,
Which must be quickly thought on—To my wish—

Enter IRETON.

Ire. I but this instant met the general, Fairfax,
Who told me his entreaty had prevail'd
To save the life of Charles. 'Tis more than wonder.
Crom. Ireton, thy presence never was more timely.
I would disclose; but now each moment's loss
Is more than the neglect of future years.
Hie thee in person to St James's, Ireton,
And warn the officer, whose charge leads forth
The king to execution, to be sudden:
Let him be more than punctual to the time;
If his respect to us forerun his warrant,
It shall win greatness for him; so inform him—
That done, repair o' th' instant to the army,
And see a chosen party march directly,
(Such as can well be trusted) post them, Ireton,
Around the scaffold——My best kinsman, fly.
[*Exit* IRETON.
Why, now, I think I have secur'd my point;
I set out in the current of the tide,
And not one wind that blows around the compass
But drives me to success. Ambition, now,
Soars to its darling height, and, eagle-like,
Looks at the sun of power, enjoys its blaze,
And grows familiar with the brightness; now I see
Dominion nigh; superiority
Beckons and points me to the chair of state;
There grandeur robes me. Now let Cromwell boast
That he has reft the crown from Charles's brow,
To make it blaze more awful on his own. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

The King discovered on a Couch.

King. Kind sleep, farewell!
Thou hast been loyal in the nightly care,
And always smooth'd my pillow: at our parting,
As to a faithful friend, I say, farewell,
And thank thee for thy service. Here's another,

Enter Bishop JUXON.

Whose better care gives quiet to the mind;
Who gives us the rich opiate of content,
That makes us sleep in hope, and wake to mercy;
Him too, the bankrupt Charles can only pay
As he has done the former; no return,
But the poor gratitude of thanks, warm from the heart.
Say, my good lord, have you so soften'd rigour,
That I may see my children ere I die?
Jux. It is permitted, sir; they wait without;
I would not let them enter, till I knew
You were prepar'd, and ready for the interview.
[*Exit* JUXON.
King. Good Juxon, lead them hither. Now the father,
Spite of my firmness, steals into my eye,
And melts my manhood. Heart, thou hast no temper
Proof against nature, speaking in a child!

Enter Bishop JUXON, JAMES, GLO'STER, *and* ELIZABETH.

James. My royal father!
King. Good Juxon, make them rise;
For if I look that way I shall kneel too,
And join with them in tears. A chair, good Juxon.
[JUXON *brings a chair forward, and raises the children.*
Come hither, James; nay, do not weep, my boy;
Keep thy eyes bright to look on better times.
James. I will command my nature if I can,
And stop these tears of sorrow; for indeed,
They drown my sight; and I would view thee well,
Copy my royal father in his death,
And be the son of his heroic virtues.
King. Thou art the child of duty: hear me, James,
And lay up this last lesson in thy heart:
When I am dead, look on thy brother Charles,
Not as thy brother only, but thy king;
Pay him fraternal love, and subject duty;
Nor let ambition, or the thirst to reign,
Poison thy firm allegiance. When thou seest him,
Bear him my blessing, and this last advice:
If Heaven restores him to his lawful crown,
Let him wreak no revenge upon his foes,
But think it his best conquest to forgive;
With kindness let him treat success, so shall she be
A constant guest; his promise, when once given,
Let no advantage break; nor any view
Make him give up his honesty to reach it:
Let him maintain his power, but not increase it;
The string, prerogative, when strain'd too high,
Cracks like the tortur'd chord of harmony,
And spoils the concert between king and subject:
Let him regard his people more than ministers,
Whose interest or ambition may mislead him.
These rules observ'd, may make him a good prince,
And happier than his father. Wilt thou, James,
Remember this?
James. Oh, doubt not, royal sir!
Can what my father says escape my memory;
And at a time when he shall speak no more?
King. Come to my arms, my boy.
James. Would I could weep the blood that warms my heart!
For water wrongs my sorrow.
King. My dear Elizabeth,
Draw near, and take thy dying father's blessing.
Say to thy mother (if thou e'er shalt see her,)
That my thoughts never wander'd from her; that my heart
Holds her as dear, even in this hour of death,
As when my eyes first languish'd on her beauties;
Tell her that Charles is only gone before
T' inherit an immortal crown, and share it with her.
Farewell, Elizabeth! and let thy love
And thy obedience wait thy brother Charles.
Eliz. Alas, my father, I but now have found
A passage for my words, and yet you say,
Farewell, already!
King. Come, my little Glo'ster,
Come to my arms, and let me kiss thy cheek.
Glo. Alas, my lord, 'tis cold and wet with tears!
I'll wipe it dry, and warm it with my hand,
That it may meet your kindness as it ought.
King. Glo'ster, when I am dead, your brother Charles
Is then your king and master——Love and obey him.
These men who shall cut off thy father's head,
When I am dead, perhaps, may make thee king;
But do not thou, I charge thee, on my blessing,
Accept the crown while thy two brothers live;
Consider, Glo'ster, they were born before thee,
And have an elder title——Wilt thou, Glo'ster?
Glo. A king! No, they shall tear me first in pieces.
King. Oh, nature, nature, do not strike so deeply!
This scene is worse than death——I am ready sir. [TOMLINSON *at the door*
James. Oh, sir!
Eliz. My lord!
Glo. My father!
King. Oh!
Glo. I cannot part from you, my dearest father
Would not those bloody men that cut your head off,

GUSTAVUS VASA,

THE

DELIVERER OF HIS COUNTRY.

BY

BROOKE.

PROLOGUE.

BRITONS, this night presents a state distrest,
Though brave, yet vanquish'd, and, though great, oppprest;
Vice, rav'ning vulture, on her vitals prey'd,
Her peers, her prelates, fell corruption sway'd;
Their rights, for power, th' ambitious weakly sold,
The wealthy, poorly, for superfluous gold.
Hence wasting ills, hence severing factions rose,
And gave large entrance to invading foes:
Truth, justice, honour, fled th' infected shore,
For freedom, sacred freedom, was no more.
Then, greatly rising in his country's right,
Her hero, her deliverer, sprung to light;
A race of hardy, northern sons he led,
Guiltless of courts, untainted, and unread,
Whose inborn spirit spurn'd th' ignoble fee,
Whose hands scorn'd bondage, for their hearts were free.

Ask ye, what law their conquering cause confest?
Great nature's law, the law within the breast;
Form'd by no art, and to no sect confin'd,
But stamp'd by Heav'n upon th' unletter'd mind.
Such, such of old the first-born natives were,
Who breath'd the virtues of Britannia's air;
Their realm, when mighty Cæsar vainly sought,
For mightier freedom against Cæsar fought,
And rudely drove the fam'd invader home,
To tyrannize o'er polish'd, venal Rome.
Our bard, exalted in a free-born flame,
To every nation would transfer this claim:
He to no state, no climate, bounds his page,
He bids the moral beam through every age;
Then be your judgment generous as his plan!
Ye sons of freedom, save the friend of man!

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

CRISTIERN, *king of Denmark and Norway, and usurper of Sweden.*
TROLLIO, *a Swede, archbishop of Upsal, and vice-gerent to Cristiern.*
PETERSON, *a Swedish nobleman, secretly of the Danish party, and friend to Trollio.*
LAERTES, *a young Danish nobleman, attendant to Cristina.*
GUSTAVUS, *formerly general of the Swedes, and first cousin to the deceased king.*
ARVIDA, *of the royal blood of Sweden, friend and cousin to Gustavus.*
ANDERSON, *chief lord of Dalecarlia.*
ARNOLDUS, *a Swedish priest, and chaplain in the copper-mines of Dalecarlia.*
SIVARD, *captain of the Dalecarlians.*

WOMEN.

CRISTINA, *daughter to Cristiern.*
AUGUSTA, *mother to Gustavus,* } *Prisoners in*
GUSTAVA, *sister to Gustavus, a child,* } *Cristiern's camp.*
MARIANA, *attendant and confidant to Cristina.*

Soldiers, Peasants, Messengers, and Attendants.

SCENE,—*Dalecarlia, a northern province in Sweden.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Inside of the Copper-mines of Dalecarlia.*

Enter ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, *and Servants, with torches.*

And. You tell me wonders.
Arn. Soft, behold, my lord,
[*Points behind the scenes.*
Behold him stretch'd, where reigns eternal night,
The flint his pillow, and cold damps his covering!
Yet, bold of spirit, and robust of limb,
He throws inclemency aside, nor feels
The lot of human frailty.
And. What horrors hang around! the savage race
Ne'er hold their den, but where some glimmering ray
May bring the cheer of morn. What, then, is he?
His dwelling marks a secret in his soul,
And whispers somewhat more than man about him.
Arn. Draw but the veil of his apparent wretchedness,
And you shall find his form is but assumed,
To hoard some wondrous treasure lodged within.
And. Let him bear up to what thy praises speak him,
And I will win him, spite of his reserve,
Bind him, with sacred friendship, to my soul,
And make him half myself.
Arn. 'Tis nobly promised;
For worth is rare, and wants a friend in Sweden;
And yet I tell thee, in her age of heroes,
When, nursed by freedom, all her sons grew great,
And every peasant was a prince in virtue,
I greatly err, or this abandoned stranger
Had stepped the first for fame, though now he seeks
To veil his name, and cloud his shine of virtues;
For there is danger in them.
And. True, Arnoldus;
Were there a prince, throughout the sceptered globe,
Who searched out merit, for its due preferment,
With half that care our tyrant seeks it out
For ruin; happy, happy were that state,
Beyond the golden fable of those pure
And early ages. Wherefore this, good Heaven?
Is it of fate, that, who assumes a crown,
Throws off humanity?
Arn. So Cristiern holds.
He claims our country as by right of conquest,
A right to every wrong. Even now, 'tis said,
The tyrant envies what our mountains yield
Of health, or aliment; he comes upon us,
Attended by a numerous host, to seize
These last retreats of our expiring liberty.
And. Say'st thou?
Arn. This rising day, this instant hour,
Thus chaced, we stand upon the utmost brink
Of steep perdition, and must leap the precipice,
Or turn upon our hunters.
And. Now, Gustavus!
Thou prop and glory of inglorious Sweden,
Where art thou, mightiest man?—Were he but here!—
I'll tell thee, my Arnoldus, I beheld him,
Then when he first drew sword, serene and dreadful,
As the browed evening ere the thunder break;
For soon he made it toilsome to our eyes
To mark his speed, and trace the paths of conquest.
In vain we followed, where he swept the field;
'Twas death alone could wait upon Gustavus.
Arn. He was, indeed, whate'er our wish could form him.
And. Arrayed and beauteous in the blood of Danes,
The invaders of his country, thrice he chaced
This Cristiern, this fell conqueror, this usurper,
With rout and foul dishonour at his heels,
To plunge his head in Denmark.
Arn. Nor ever had the tyrant known return,
To tread our necks, and blend us with the dust,
Had he not dared to break through every law
That sanctifies the nations, seized our hero,
The pledge of specious treaty, tore him from us,
And led him, chained, to Denmark.
And. Then we fell.
If still he lives, we yet may learn to rise;
But never can I dare to rest a hope
On any arm but his.
Arn. And, yet, I trust,
This stranger, that delights to dwell with darkness,
Unknown, unfriended, compassed round with wretchedness,
Conceals some mighty purpose in his breast,
Now labouring into birth.
And. When came he hither?
Arn. Six moons have changed upon the face of night,
Since here he first arrived, in servile weeds,
But yet of mien majestic. I observed him,
And, ever as I gazed, some nameless charm,
A wondrous greatness not to be concealed,
Broke through his form, and awed my soul before him.
Amid these mines, he earns the hireling's portion;
His hands out-toil the hind; while, on his brow
Sits patience, bathed in the laborious drops
Of painful industry. I oft have sought,
With friendly tender of some worthier service,
To win him from his temper; but he shuns
All offers, yet declined with graceful act,
Engaging beyond utterance: and, at eve,
When all retire to some domestic solace,
He only stays, and, as you see, the earth
Receives him to her dark and cheerless bosom.

And. Has no unwary moment e'er betrayed
The labours of his soul, some favourite grief,
Whereon to raise conjecture?
Arn. I saw, as some bold peasants late deplored
Their country's bondage, sudden passion seized
And bore him from his seeming; strait his form
Was turned to terror, ruin filled his eye,
And his proud step appeared to awe the world:
When checked, as though an impotence of rage,
Damp sadness soon usurped upon his brow,
And the big tear rolled graceful down his visage.
And. Your words imply a man of much importance.
Arn. So I suspected; and at dead of night
Stole on his slumbers: his full heart was busy;
And oft his tongue pronounced the hated name
Of—bloody Cristiern——there he seemed to pause;
And, recollected to one voice, he cried,
'O Sweden! O my country! Yet I'll save thee.'
And. Forbear—he rises—Heavens, what majesty!

Enter GUSTAVUS.

And. Your pardon, stranger, if the voice of virtue,
If cordial amity from man to man,
And somewhat that should whisper to the soul,
To seek and cheer the sufferer, led me hither,
Impatient to salute thee. Be it thine
Alone to point the path of friendship out;
And my best power shall wait upon thy fortunes.
Gust. Yes, generous man! there is a wondrous test,
The truest, worthiest, noblest cause for friendship;
Dearer than life, than interest, or alliance,
And equal to your virtues.
And. Say——unfold.
Gust. Art thou a soldier, a chief lord in Sweden,
And yet a stranger to thy country's voice,
That loudly calls the hidden patriot forth?
But what's a soldier? What's a lord in Sweden?
All worth is fled, or fallen——nor has a life
Been spared, but for dishonour; spared to breed
More slaves for Denmark, to beget a race
Of new-born virgins for the insatiate lust
Of our new masters. Sweden! thou'rt no more!
Queen of the North! thy land of liberty,
Thy house of heroes, and thy seat of virtues,
Is now the tomb, where thy brave sons lie speechless,
And foreign snakes engender.
And. O 'tis true.
But wherefore? To what purpose?
Gust. Think of Stockholm!
When Cristiern seized upon the hour of peace,
And drenched the hospitable floor with blood;
Then fell the flower of Sweden, mighty names!
Her hoary senators, and gasping patriots.
The tyrant spoke, and his licentious band
Of blood-trained ministry were loosed to ruin.
Invention wantoned in the toil of infants
Stabbed on the breast, or reeking on the points
Of sportive javelins. Husbands, sons, and sires,
With dying ears drank in the loud despair
Of shrieking chastity. The waste of war
Was peace and friendship to this civil massacre.
O Heaven and earth! Is there a cause for this!
For sin without temptation, calm, cool villainy,
Deliberate mischief, unimpassioned lust,
And smiling murder? Lie thou there, my soul;
Sleep, sleep upon it! image not the form
Of any dream but this, 'till time grows pregnant,
And thou canst wake to vengeance.
And. Thou hast greatly moved me. Ha! thy tears start forth.
Yes, let them flow, our country's fate demands them;
I too will mingle mine, while yet 'tis left us
To weep in secret, and to sigh with safety.
But wherefore talk of vengeance? 'Tis a word
Should be engraven on the new-fallen snow,
Where the first beam may melt it from observance.
Vengeance on Cristiern! Norway and the Dane,
The sons of Sweden, all the peopled North,
Bends at his nod: my humbler boast of power
Meant not to cope with crowns.
Gust. Then what remains
Is briefly this; your friendship has my thanks,
But must not my acceptance: never——no——
First sink, thou baleful mansion, to the centre,
And be thy darkness doubled round my head,
'Ere I forsake thee for the bliss of paradise,
To be enjoyed beneath a tyrant's sceptre!
No, that were slavery—Freedom is
The brilliant gift of Heaven, 'tis reason's self,
The kin of Deity—I will not part it.
And. Nor I, while I can hold it; but alas!
That is not in our choice.
Gust. Why? where's that power whose engines are of force
To bend the brave and virtuous man to slavery?
Base fear, the laziness of lust, gross appetites,
These are the ladders, and the grovelling footstool,
From whence the tyrant rises on our wrongs,
Secure and sceptered in the soul's servility.
He has debauched the genius of our country,
And rides triumphant, while her captive sons
Await his nod, the silken slaves of pleasure,
Or fettered in their fears.
And. I apprehend you.
No doubt, a base submission to our wrongs
May well be termed a voluntary bondage;
But think the heavy hand of power is on us;
Of power, from whose imprisonment and chains
Not all our free-born virtue can protect us.
Gust. 'Tis there you err, for I have felt their force;
And had I yielded to enlarge these limbs,
Or share the tyrant's empire, on the terms
Which he proposed—I were a slave indeed.
No—in the deep and deadly damp of dungeons,
The soul can rear her sceptre, smile in anguish,

And triumph o'er oppression.
And. O glorious spirit! think not I am slack
To relish what thy noble scope intends;
But then the means! the peril! and the consequence!
Great are the odds, and who shall dare the trial?
Gust. I dare.
O wert thou still that gallant chief,
Whom once I knew, I could unfold a purpose
Would make the greatness of thy heart to swell,
And burst in the conception.
And. Give it utterance.
Perhaps there lie some embers yet in Sweden,
Which, wakened by thy breath, might rise in flames,
And spread vindictive round—You say you know me;
But give a tongue to such a cause as this,
And, if you hold me tardy in the call,
You know me not—But thee I've surely known;
For there is somewhat in that voice and form,
Which has alarmed my soul to recollection;
But 'tis as in a dream, and mocks my reach.
Gust. Then name the man whom it is death to know,
Or knowing to conceal—and I am he.
And. Gustavus?—Heavens! 'tis he! 'tis he himself!

Enter ARVIDA, *speaking to a Servant.*

Arv. I thank you, friend, he's here, you may retire.
And. Good morning to my noble guest; you're early. [GUSTAVUS *walks apart.*
Arv. I come to take a short and hasty leave:
'Tis said, that from the mountain's neighbouring brow,
The canvas of a thousand tents appears,
Whitening the vale—Suppose the tyrant there;
You know my safety lies not in the interview—
Ha! What is he, who in the shreds of slavery
Supports a step, superior to the state
And insolence of ermine?
Gust. Sure that voice,
Was once the voice of friendship and Arvida!
Arv. Ha! Yes——'tis he!—ye powers! it is Gustavus!
Gust. Thou brother of adoption! In the bond
Of every virtue wedded to my soul,
Enter my heart! it is thy property.
Arv. I'm lost in joy and wondrous circumstance.
Gust. Yet, wherefore, my Arvida, wherefore is it,
That in a place, and at a time like this,
We should thus meet? Can Cristiern cease from cruelty?
Say, whence is this, my brother? How escaped you?
Did I not leave thee in the Danish dungeon?
Arv. Of that hereafter. Let me view thee first.
How graceful is the garb of wretchedness,
When worn by virtue! Fashions turn to folly;
Their colours tarnish, and their pomps grow poor,
To her magnificence.
Gust. Yes, my Arvida.
Beyond the sweeping of the proudest train,
That shades a monarch's heel, I prize these weeds,
For they are sacred to my country's freedom.
A mighty enterprise has been conceived,
And thou art come, auspicious to the birth,
As sent to fix the seal of Heaven upon it.
Arv. Point but thy purpose——let it be to bleed——
Gust. Your hands, my friends!
All. Our hearts.
Gust. I know they're brave.
Of such the time has need; of hearts like yours
Faithful and firm; of hands inured and strong;
For we must ride upon the neck of danger,
And plunge into a purpose big with death.
And. Here let us kneel, and bind us to thy side.
By all——
Gust. No, hold—if we want oaths to join us,
Swift let us part, from pole to pole asunder.
A cause like ours is its own sacrament;
Truth, justice, reason, love, and liberty,
The eternal links that clasp the world, are in it,
And he, who breaks their sanction, breaks all law,
And infinite connection.
Arv. True, my lord.
And. And such the force I feel.
Arv. And I.
All. And all.
Gust. Know, then, that ere our royal Stenon fell,
While thus my valiant cousin and myself,
By chains and treachery, lay detained in Denmark,
Upon a dark and unsuspected hour,
The bloody Cristiern sought to take my head.
Thanks to the ruling power, within whose eye
Imbosomed ills and mighty treasons roll,
Prevented of their blackness, I escaped,
Led by a generous arm, and some time lay
Concealed in Denmark—for my forfeit head
Became the price of crowns, each port and path
Was shut against my passage—'till I heard
That Stenon, valiant Stenon, fell in battle,
And freedom was no more. O then, what bounds
Had power to hem the desperate! I o'erpassed them,
Traversed all Sweden, through ten thousand foes,
Impending perils, and surrounding tongues,
That from himself enquired Gustavus out.
Witness, my country, how I toiled to wake
Thy sons to liberty! In vain—for fear,
Cold fear had seized on all—Here last I came,
And shut me from the sun, whose hateful beams
Served but to shew the ruins of my country.
When here, my friends, 'twas here at length I found,
What I had left to look for, gallant spirits,
In the rough form of untaught peasantry.
And. Indeed they once were brave; our Dalecarlians
Have oft been known to give a law to kings;

And as their only wealth has been their liberty,
From all the unmeasured graspings of ambition
Have held that gem untouched—though now 'tis feared——
Gust. It is not feared—I say they yet shall hold it.
I've searched these men, and find them like the soil,
Barren without, and to the eye unlovely,
But they've their mines within; and this the day
In which I mean to prove them.
Arn. O Gustavus!
Most aptly hast thou caught the passing hour,
Upon whose critical and fated hinge
The state of Sweden turns.
Gust. And to this hour
I've therefore held me in this darksome womb,
That sends me forth as to a second birth
Of freedom, or through death to reach eternity.
This day, returned with every circling year,
In thousands pours the mountain peasants forth,
Each with his battered arms and rusty helm,
In sportive discipline well trained, and prompt
Against the day of peril—thus disguised,
Already have I stirred their latent sparks
Of slumbering virtue, apt as I could wish,
To warm before the lightest breath of liberty.
Arn. How will they kindle when, confessed to view,
Once more their loved Gustavus stands before them,
And pours his blaze of virtues on their souls!
Arv. It cannot fail.
And. It has a glorious aspect.
Arv. Now Sweden! rise and re-assert thy rights,
Or be for ever fallen.
And. Then be it so.
Arn. Lead on, thou arm of war,
To death or victory!
Gust. Let us embrace.
Why thus, my friends, thus joined in such a cause,
Are we not equal to a host of slaves!
You say the foe's at hand—Why let them come!
Steep are our hills, nor easy of access,
And few the hours we ask for their reception.
For I will take these rustic sons of liberty
In the first warmth and hurry of their souls;
And should the tyrant then attempt our heights,
He comes upon his fate—Arise, thou sun!
Haste, haste to rouse thee to the call of liberty,
That shall once more salute thy morning beam,
And hail thee to thy setting!
Arn. O blessed voice!
Prolong that note but one short day through Sweden,
And though the sun and life should set together,
It matters not—we shall have lived that day.
Arv. Were it not worth the hazard of a life
To know if Cristiern leads his powers in person,
And what his scope intends? Be mine that task;
Even to the tyrant's tent I'll win my way,
And mingle with his councils.
Gust. Go, my friend.
Dear as thou art, whene'er our country calls,
Friends, sons, and sires should yield their treasure up,
Nor own a sense beyond the public safety.
But tell me, my Arvida, ere thou goest,
Tell me what hand has made thy friend its debtor,
And given thee up to freedom and Gustavus?
Arv. Ha! let me think of that! 'tis sure she loves him. [*Aside.*
Away, thou skance and jaundiced eye of jealousy,
That tempts my soul to sicken at perfection!
Away! I will unfold it—To thyself
Arvida owes his freedom.
Gust. How, my friend?
Arv. Some months are passed since in the Danish dungeon,
With care emaciate, and unwholsome damps,
Sickening, I lay, chained to my flinty bed,
And called on death to ease me—strait a light
Shone round, as when the ministry of heaven
Descends to kneeling saints. But O! the form
That poured upon my sight—Ye angels, speak!
For ye alone are like her; or present
Such visions pictured to the nightly eye
Of fancy, tranced in bliss. She then approached,
The softest pattern of embodied meekness—
For pity had divinely touched her eye,
And harmonized her motions—'Ah,' she cried,
'Unhappy stranger, art not thou the man,
'Whose virtues have endeared thee to Gustavus?'
Gust. Gustavus did she say?
Arv. Yes, yes, her lips
Breathed forth that name with a peculiar sweetness.
Loosed from my bonds, I rose, at her command,
When, scarce recovering speech, I would have kneeled;
But 'Haste thee, haste thee for thy life,' she cried;
'And O, if e'er thy envied eyes behold
'Thy loved Gustavus, say, a gentle foe
'Has given thee to his friendship.'
Gust. You've much amazed me! Is her name a secret?
Arv. To me it is——but you perhaps may guess.
Gust. No, on my word.
Arv. You too had your deliverer.
Gust. A kind, but not a fair one—Well, my friends!
Our cause is ripe, and calls us forth to action.
Tread ye not lighter? Swells not every breast
With ampler scope to take your country in,
And breathe the cause of virtue? Rise, ye Swedes!
Rise, greatly equal to this hour's importance.
On us the eyes of future ages wait,
And this day's arm strikes forth decisive fate;
This day, that shall for ever sink—or save;
And make each Swede a monarch—or a slave.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Camp.*

Enter CRISTIERN, *Attendants &c.* TROLLIO *meets him.*

Troll. All hail, most mighty of the thrones of Europe!
The morn salutes thee with auspicious brightness,
No vapour frowns prophetic on her brow,
But the clear sun, who travels with thy arms,
Still smiles, attendant on thy growing greatness:
His evening eye shall see thee peaceful lord
Of all the north, of utmost Scandinavia;
Whence thou may'st pour thy conquests o'er the earth,
'Till farther India glows beneath thy empire,
And Lybia knows no regal name but yours.
Crist. Yes, Trollio, I confess the godlike thirst,
Ambition, that would drink a sea of glory.
But what from Dalecarlia?
Troll. Late last night,
I sent a trusty slave to Peterson,
And hourly wait some tidings.
Crist. Think you—Sure
The wretches will not dare such quick perdition.
Troll. I think they will not—Though of old I know them
All born to broils, the very sons of tumult;
Waste is their wealth, and mutiny their birth-right,
And this the yearly fever of their blood,
Their holiday of war; a day apart,
Torn out from peace, and sacred to rebellion.
Oft has their battle hung upon the brow
Of yon wild steep, a living cloud of mischiefs,
Pregnant with plagues, and emptied on the heads
Of many a monarch.
Crist. Monarchs they were not,
Pageants of wax, the mouldings of the populace,
Tame paultry idols, sceptered up for shew,
And garnished into royalty—No, Trollio;
Kings should be felt, if they would find obedience;
The beast has sense enough to know his rider;
When the knee trembles, and the hand grows slack,
He casts for liberty: but bends and turns
For him that leaps with boldness on his back,
And spurs him to the bit.

Enter a Gentleman Usher, and several Peasants, who kneel and bow at a distance.

Crist. What slaves are those?
Gent. My gracious liege, your subjects.
Crist. Whence?
Gent. Of Sweden.
From Angermannia, from Helsingia some,
Some from the Gemtian and Nerician provinces.
Crist. Their business.
Gent. They come to speak their griefs.
Crist. Their griefs! their insolence!
Is not the camel mute beneath his burden?
Were they not born to bear? Away!——hold! come,
What would these murmurers?
Gent. Most royal Cristiern,
They say they have but one—one gracious king,
And yet are bowed beneath a host of tyrants,
Task-masters, soldiers, gatherers of subsidies;
All officers of rapine, rape, and murder;
Will-doing potentates, the lords of licence,
Who weigh their sweat and blood, and heavier shame,
Even as a feather puffed away in sport,
The pastime of a gale.
Crist. I'll hear no more.
I know ye, well I know ye, ye base supplicants!
Fear is the only worship of your souls;
And ever where ye hate, ye yield obeisance.
Wretches! shall I go poring on the earth,
Lest my imperial foot should tread on emmets?
It is for you I must controul my soldiers,
And coop my eagles from their carrion? No—
Are ye not commoners, vile things in nature,
Poor priceless peasants? Slaves can know no property:
Out of my sight! [*Exeunt Peasants.*

Enter ARVIDA *guarded, and a Gentleman.*

Arv. Now, Fate, I'm caught, and what remains is obvious.
Gent. A prisoner, good my lord.
Crist. When taken?
Gent. Now, even here, before your tent;
I marked his careless action, but his eye
Of studied observation—then his port
And base attire, ill suiting—I enquired,
But found he was a stranger.
Crist. Ha! observe,
(Damned affectation) what a sullen scorn
Knits up his brow, and frowns upon our presence
What—ay—thou wouldst be thought a mystery
Some greatness in eclipse. Whence art thou slave?
Silent! Nay, then—Bring forth the torture there—
A smile! Damnation!—How the wretch assumes
The wreck of state, the suffering soul of majesty
What! have we no pre-eminence, no claim?
Dost thou not know thy life is in our power?
Arv. 'Tis therefore I despise it.
Crist. Matchless insolence!
What art thou? Speak!
Arv. Be sure, no friend to thee;
For I'm a foe to tyrants.
Crist. Fiends and fire!—
A whirlwind tear thee, most audacious traitor
Arv. Do, rage and chafe; thy wrath's benefit me, Cristiern.
How poor thy power, how empty is thy haughtiness,

When such a wretch, as I appear to be,
Can ride thy temper, harrow up thy form,
And stretch thy soul upon the rack of passion!
Crist. I'll know thee—I will know thee! Bear him hence!
Why, what are kings, if slaves can brave us thus?
Go, Trollio, hold him to the rack—Tear, search him,
Prove him through every poignance, sting him deep!
[*Exit* TROLLIO *with* ARVIDA *guarded.*

Enter a Messenger, as in haste.

Crist. What wouldst thou, fellow?
Mess. O my sovereign lord,
I am come fast and far, from even till morn;
Five times I've crossed the shade of sleepless night,
Impatient of thy presence.
Crist. Whence?
Mess. From Denmark;
Commended from the consort of thy throne
To speed and privacy.
Crist. Your words would taste of terror—Wretch, speak out,
Nor dare to tremble here—For, didst thou bear
Thy tidings from a thousand leagues around,
Unmoved, I move the whole, the cent'ring nave,
Where turns that mighty circle—Speak thy message.
Mess. A secret malady, my gracious liege,
Some factious vapour, risen from off the skirts
Of southmost Norway, has diffused its bane,
And rages now within the heart of Denmark.
Crist. It must not, cannot, 'tis impossible!
What, my own Danes! Nay, then, the world wants weeding.
I will not bear it—Hell! I'd rather see
This earth a desert, desolate and wild,
And, like the lion, stalk my lonely round,
Famished and roaring for my prey——Call Trollio!
I'll have men studied, deeply read in mischiefs.

Enter a Servant, who kneels and delivers a letter.

Crist. From whom?
Serv. From Peterson.
Crist. To Trollio—Right. [*Reads.*
How's this?—Be gone—
Go all—without there—wait my pleasure.
O curse! How hell has timed its plagues!

Enter TROLLIO.

Crist. Come near, my Trollio.
We've heard ill news from Denmark—that's a trifle—
But here's to blast thy eyes—read——
Troll. Ha! Gustavus!
So near us, and in arms!
Crist. What's to be done? Now, Trollio, now's the time
To subtilize thy soul, sound every depth,
And waken all the wondrous statesman in thee.
For I must tell thee, (spite of pride and royalty,
Of guarding armies, and of circling nations,
That bend beneath my nod) this cursed Gustavus
Invades my sinking spirits, awes my heart,
And sits upon my slumbers—All in vain
Has he been daring, and have I been vigilant;
Spite of himself he still evades the hunter,
And, if there's power in heaven or hell, it guards him.
When was I vanquished, but when he opposed me?
When have I conquered, but when he was absent?
His name's a host, a terror to my legions;
And by my tripled crown, I swear, Gustavus,
I'd rather meet all Europe for my foe,
Than see thy face in arms!
Troll. Be calm, my liege,
And listen to a secret big with consequence,
That gives thee back the second man on earth,
Whose valour could plant fears around thy throne;
Thy prisoner——
Crist. What of him?
Troll. The prince Arvida.
Crist. How!
Troll. The same.
Crist. My royal fugitive?
Troll. Most certain.
Crist. Now, then, 'tis plain who sent him hither.
Troll. Yes.
Pray give me leave, my lord—a thought comes cross me—
If so he must be ours—— [*Pauses.*
Your pardon for a question—Has Arvida
E'er seen your beauteous daughter, your Cristina?
Crist. Never—yes—possibly he might, that day
When the proud pair, Gustavus and Arvida,
Through Copenhagen drew a length of chain,
And graced my chariot wheels—but why the question?
Troll. I'll tell you. While even now he stood before us,
I marked his high demeanour, and my eye
Claimed some remembrance of him, though in clouds
Doubtful and distant; but a nearer view
Renewed the characters effaced by absence.
Yet, lest he might presume upon a friendship
Of ancient league between us, I dissembled,
Nor seemed to know him—On he proudly strode,
As who should say, back, Fortune, know thy distance!
Thus steadily he passed, and mocked his fate,
When, lo! the princess to her morning walk
Came forth attended—quick amazement seized
Arvida at the sight; his steps took root,
A tremor shook him; and his altering cheek
Now sudden flushed, then fled its wonted colour;
While with an eager and intemperate look
He bent his form, and hung upon her beauties.
Crist. Ha! Did our daughter note him?
Troll. No, my lord;
She passed regardless—Strait his pride fell from him,

And at her name he started.
Then heaved a sigh, and cast a look to Heaven,
Of such a mute, yet eloquent emotion,
As seemed to say, Now, Fate, thou hast prevailed,
And found one way to triumph o'er Arvida!
Crist. But whither would this lead?
Troll. List, list, my lord!
While thus his soul's unseated, shook by passion,
Could we engage him to betray Gustavus—
Crist. O empty hope! Impossible, my Trollio.
Do I not know him, and the cursed Gustavus?
Both fixed in resolution deep as hell,
And proud as high Olympus!
Troll. Ah, my liege,
No mortal footing treads so firm in virtue,
As always to abide the slippery path,
Nor deviate with the bias. Some have few,
But each man has his failing, some defect
Wherein to slide temptation—Leave him to me.
Crist. I know thou hast a serpentizing genius,
Canst wind the subtlest mazes of the soul,
And trace her wanderings to the source of action.
If thou canst bend this proud one to our purpose,
And make the lion crouch, 'tis well—if not,
Away at once, and sweep him from remembrance.
Troll. Then I must promise deep.
Crist. Ay, any thing; out-bid ambition.
Troll. Love?
Crist. Ha! Yes—our daughter too—if she can bribe him:
But then to win him to betray his friend?
Troll. O doubt it not, my lord—for if he loves,
As sure he greatly does, I have a stratagem
That holds the certainty of fate within it.
Love is a passion whose effects are various;
It ever brings some change upon the soul,
Some virtue, or some vice, till then unknown;
Degrades the hero, and makes cowards valiant.
Crist. True; when it pours upon a youthful temper,
Open and apt to take the torrent in,
It owns no limits, no restraint it knows,
But sweeps all down, though Heaven and hell oppose;
Even virtue rears in vain her sacred mound,
Razed in its rage, or in its swellings drowned.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Opens, and discovers ARVIDA *in chains; Guards preparing instruments of death and torture. He advances in confusion.*

Arv. Off, off, vain cumbrance, ye conflicting thoughts!
Leave me to Heaven. O peace!—It will not be—
Just when I rose above mortality,
To pour her wondrous weight of charms upon me!
At such a time, it was, it was too much!
To pluck the soaring pinion of my soul,
While, eagle-eyed, she held her flight to Heaven,
O'er pain and death triumphant! Help, ye saints,
Angelic ministers descend, descend,
And lift me to myself! hold, bind my heart
Firm and unshaken in the approaching ruin,
The wreck of earth-born frailty! and, O Heaven,
For every pang these tortured limbs shall feel,
Descend, in ten-fold blessings, on Gustavus!
Yes, bless him, bless him! Crown his hours with joy,
His head with glory, and his arms with conquest;
Set his firm foot upon the neck of tyrants,
And be his name the balm of every lip
That breathes through Sweden! Worthiest to be styled
Their friend, their chief, their father, and their king!

Enter TROLLIO.

Troll. Unbind your prisoner.
Arv. How?
Troll. You have your liberty,
And may depart unquestioned.
Arv. Do not mock me.
It is not to be thought, while power remains,
That Cristiern wants a reason to be cruel.
But let him know I would not be obliged.
He, who accepts the favours of a tyrant,
Shares in his guilt; they leave a stain behind them.
Troll. You wrong the native temper of his soul;
Cruel of force, but never of election:
Prudence compelled him to a shew of tyranny;
Howe'er, those politics are now no more,
And mercy, in her turn, shall shine on Sweden.
Arv. Indeed! It were a strange, a blessed reverse,
Devoutly to be wished! but then the cause,
The cause, my lord, must surely be uncommon.
May I presume?
Perhaps a secret.
Troll. No—or if it were,
The boldness of thy spirit claims respect,
And should be answered. Know, the only man,
In whom our monarch ever knew repulse,
Is now our friend; that terror of the field,
The invincible Gustavus.
Arv. Ha! Friend to Cristiern? Guard thyself, my heart, [*Aside.*
Nor seem to take alarm!—Why, good my lord,
What terror is there in a wretch proscribed,
Naked of means, and distant as Gustavus?
Troll. There you mistake—Nor knew we till this hour
The danger was so near—From yonder hill
He sends proposals, backed with all the powers
Of Dalecarlia, those licentious resolutes,
Who, having nought to hazard in the wreck,
Are ever foremost to foment a storm.
Arv. I were too bold to question on the terms.
Troll. No—trust me, valiant man, whoe'er thou art,
I would do much to win a worth like thine,
By any act of service, or of confidence.
The terms Gustavus claims indeed are haughty;
The freedom of his mother and his sister,
His forfeit province, Gothland, and the isles,

Submitted to his sceptre. But the league,
The bond of amity, and lasting friendship,
Is, that he claims Cristina for his bride.—
You start, and seem surprised.
Arv. A sudden pain
Just struck athwart my breast——But say, my lord,
I thought you named Cristina.
Troll. Yes.
Arv. O torture!— [*Aside.*
What of her, my good lord?
Troll. I said, Gustavus claimed her for his bride.
Arv. His bride! his wife!
You did not mean his wife!—Do fiends feel thus? [*Aside.*
Down, heart, nor tell thy anguish!—Pray excuse me;
Did you not say, the princess was his wife?
Whose wife, my lord?
Troll. I did not say what was, but what must be.
Arv. Touching Gustavus, was it not?
Troll. The same.
Arv. His bride!
Troll. I say his bride, his wife; his loved Cristina!
Cristina, fancied in the very prime
And youthful smile of nature; formed for joys
Unknown to mortals.—You seem indisposed.
Arv. The crime of constitution—Oh Gustavus! [*Aside.*
This is too much!—And think you then, my lord—
What, will the royal Cristiern e'er consent
To match his daughter with his deadliest foe?
Troll. What should he do? War else must be eternal.
Besides, some rumours from his Danish realms
Make peace essential here.
Arv. Yes, peace has sweets,
That Hybla never knew; it sleeps on down,
Culled gently from beneath the cherub's wing;
No bed for mortals—man is warfare—all
A hurricane within; yet friendship stoops,
And gilds the gloom with falsehood, smiles, and varnish!
For still the storm grows high, and then no shore!
No rock to split on! 'Twere a kind perdition
To sink ten thousand fathom at a plunge,
And fasten on oblivion—there we hold,
And all is—— [*Faints.*
Troll. Help, bear him up. O potency of love,
That plucks this noble fabric from his base!
Bend, bend him forward—He revives—How fare you?
Arv. I know not—yet a dagger were most friendly.
Return me, Trollio, O return me back
To death, to racks! Undone, undone Arvida!
Troll. Is't possible! My lord, the prince Arvida!
My friend! [*Embraces him.*
Arv. Confusion to the name! [*Turns.*
Troll. Why this, good Heaven? And wherefore thus disguised?
Arv. Yes, that accomplished traitor, that Gustavus,
While he sat planning private scenes of happiness,
O well dissembled! He, he sent me hither;
My friendly, unsuspecting heart a sacrifice,
To make death sure, and rid him of a rival.
Troll. A rival! Do you then love Cristiern's daughter?
Arv. Name her not, Trollio, since she can't be mine.—
Gustavus! how, ah, how hast thou deceived me!
Who could have looked for falsehood from thy brow,
Whose heavenly arch was as the throne of virtue!
Thy eye appeared a sun to cheer the world,
Thy bosom truth's fair palace, and thy arms,
Benevolent, the harbour for mankind.
Troll. What's to be done! Believe me, valiant prince,
I know not which most sways me to thy interests,
My love to thee, or hatred to Gustavus.
Arv. Would you then save me? Think, contrive it quickly!
Lend me your troops—by all the powers of vengeance,
Myself will face this terror of the north,
This son of fame—this—O Gustavus—What?
Where had I wandered?—Stab my bleeding country!
Save, shield me from that thought!
Troll. Retire, my lord;
For see, the princess comes.
Arv. Where, Trollio, where?—
Ha! Yes, she comes indeed! her beauties drive
Time, place, and truth, and circumstance before them!
Perdition pleases there—pull—tear me from her!
Yet must I gaze—but one—but one look more,
And I were lost for ever. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Enter CRISTINA, MARIANA, *and Attendants.*

Cristina. Forbid it, shame! Forbid it, virgin modesty!
No, no, my friend, Gustavus ne'er shall know it.
O I am over-paid with conscious pleasure;
The sense but to have saved that wond'rous man,
Is still a smiling cherub in my breast,
And whispers peace within.
Mar. 'Tis strange a man, of his high note and consequence,
Should so evade the busy search of thousands,
That six long months have shut him from enquiry,
And not an eye can trace him to his covert.
Cristina. Once 'twas not so; each infant lisped, Gustavus!
It was the favourite name of every language.
His slightest motions filled the world with tidings;
Waked he, or slept, fame watched the important hour,
And nations told it round.
Mar. I've heard, my princess,

What time Gustavus lay detained in Denmark,
Your royal father sought the hero's friendship,
And offered ample terms of peace and amity.
Cristina. He did; he offered that, my Mariana,
For which contending monarchs sued in vain:
He offered me, his darling, his Cristina;
But I was slighted, slighted by a captive,
Though kingdoms swelled my dower.
Mar. Amazement fix me!
Rejected by Gustavus!
Cristina. Yes, Mariana; but rejected nobly.
Not worlds could win him to betray his country!
Had he consented, I had then despised him.
What's all the gaudy glitter of a crown?
What, but the glaring meteor of ambition,
That leads a wretch benighted in his errors,
Points to the gulf, and shines upon destruction.
Mar. You wrong your charms, whose power might reconcile
Things opposite in nature—Had he seen you!—
Cristina. He has, my Mariana, he has seen me.
I'll tell thee—yet while inexpert of years,
I heard of bloody spoils, the waste of war,
And dire conflicting man; Gustavus' name
Superior rose, still dreadful in the tale:
Then first he seized my infancy of soul,
As somewhat fabled of gigantic fierceness,
Too huge for any form; he scared my sleep,
And filled my young idea. Not the boast
Of all his virtues, graces only known
To him, and heavenly natures! could erase
The strong impression; till that wondrous day
In which he met my eyes. But O, O Heaven!
O love, and all ye cordial powers of passion!
What then was my amazement! he was chained,
Was chained, my Mariana! Like the robes
Of coronation, worn by youthful kings,
He drew his shackles. The Herculean nerve
Braced his young arm; and, softened in his cheek,
Lived more than woman's sweetness! Then his eye!
His mien! his native dignity! He looked,
As though he led captivity in chains,
And all were slaves around.
Mar. Did he observe you?
Cristina. He did: for as I trembled, looked, and sighed,
His eyes met mine; he fixed their glories on me.
Confusion thrilled me then, and secret joy,
Fast throbbing, stole its treasures from my heart,
And, mantling upward, turned my face to crimson.
I wished—but did not dare to look—he gazed;
When sudden, as by force, he turned away,
And would no more behold me.

Enter LAERTES.

Laer. Ah, bright imperial maid! my royal mistress!
Cristina. What wouldst thou say? Thy looks speak terror to me.
Laer. O you are ruined, sacrificed, undone!
I heard it all; your cruel, cruel father
Has sold you, given you up a spoil to treason,
The purchase of the noblest blood on earth—
Gustavus!
Cristina. Ah! What of him? Where, where is he?
Laer. In Dalecarlia, on some great design,
Doomed in an hour to fall by faithless hands:
His friend, the brave, the false, deceived Arvida,
Even now prepares to lead a band of ruffians
Beneath the winding covert of the hill,
And seize Gustavus, obvious to the snares
Of friendship's fair dissemblance. And your father
Has vowed your beauties to Arvida's arms,
The purchase of his falsehood.
Cristina. Shield me, Heaven!
First, duty, break thy filial bands in sunder,
And blot the name of parent from the world!
Is there no lett, no means of quick prevention?
Laer. Behold my life still chained to thy direction;
My will shall have a wing for every word,
That breathes thy mandate.
Cristina. Will you, good Laertes?
Alas, I fear to overtask thy friendship;
Say, will you save me then—O go, haste, fly!
Acquaint Gustavus—if, if he must fall,
Let hosts that hem this single lion in,
Let nations hunt him down—let him fall nobly.
Laer. I go, my princess—Heaven direct me to him! [*Exit.*
Cristina. I would pray too, to save me from pollution;
Detested stain, the touch of the betrayer!
But mighty love the partial prayer arrests,
And leaves me only anxious for Gustavus.
For him cold fears my fainting bosom chill,
His cares distract me, and his dangers kill;
Ye powers! if deaf to all the vows I make,
Yet shield Gustavus, for Gustavus' sake;
Protect his virtues from a faithless foe,
And save your only image, left below!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Mountains of Dalecarlia.*

Enter GUSTAVUS, *as a peasant. Dalecarlians following.*

Gust. Ye men of Sweden, wherefore are ye come?
See ye not yonder, how the locusts swarm,
To drink the fountains of your honour up,
And leave your hills a desert—Wretched men!
Why came ye forth! Is this a time for sport?
Or are ye met with song and jovial feast,
To welcome your new guests, your Danish visitants?
To stretch your supple necks beneath their feet,
And fawning lick the dust?—Go, go, my countrymen,
Each to your several mansions; trim them out;
Cull all the tedious earnings of your toil
To purchase bondage—Bid your blooming daughters,
And your chaste wives, to spread their beds with softness;
Then go ye forth, and with your proper hands
Conduct your masters in; conduct the sons
Of lust and violation—O Swedes, Swedes!
Heavens! are ye men, and will ye suffer this?

Enter ARNOLDUS, *who talks apart with* GUSTAVUS.

1 *Dale.* How my blood boils!
2 *Dale.* Who is this honest spokesman?
3 *Dale.* What, know ye not Rodolphus of the mines?
A better labourer ne'er struck steel to stone.
Gust. There was a time, my friends la glorious time!
When, had a single man of your forefathers
Upon the frontier met a host in arms,
His courage scarce had turned; himself had stood,
Alone had stood the bulwark of his country.
Your sires were known but by their manly fronts;
On their black brows, enthroned, sat Liberty,
The awe of honour, and contempt of death.
1 *Dale.* We are not bastards.
2 *Dale.* No.
3 *Dale.* We're Dalecarlians.
Gust. Come, come ye on then: Here I take my stand,
Here on the brink, the very verge of liberty!
Although contention rise upon the clouds,
Mix heaven with earth, and roll the ruin onward,
Here will I fix, and breast me to the shock,
'Till I, or Denmark, fall.
Siv. And who art thou,
That thus wouldst swallow all the glory up
That should redeem the times? Behold this breast!
The sword has tilled it; and the stripes of slaves
Shall ne'er trace honour here; shall never blot
The fair inscription—Never shall the cords
Of Danish insolence bind down these arms,
That bore my royal master from the field.
Gust. Ha! Say you, brother? Were you there—O grief!
Where liberty and Stenon fell together?
Siv. Yes, I was there—A bloody field it was,
Where Conquest gasped, and wanted breath to tell,
Its o'er-toiled triumph. There, our bleeding king,
There Stenon on this bosom made his bed,
And rolling back his dying eyes upon me—
'Soldier,' he cried, 'if e'er it be thy lot
'To see my valiant cousin, great Gustavus,
'Tell him——for once, that I have fought like him,
'And would like him have'—
Conquered—he should have said—but there, O there,
Death stopt him short!
Gust. Come to my arms, and let me hide thy tears,
For I have caught their softness——O Danes, Danes!
You shall weep blood for this. Shall they not, brother?
Yes, we will deal our might with thrifty vengeance,
A life for every blow! and, when we fall,
There shall be weight in it; like the tottering towers,
That draw contiguous ruin.
Siv. Brave, brave man!
My soul admires thee—By my father's spirit,
I would not barter such a death as this
For immortality! Nor we alone—
Here be the trusty gleanings of that field
Where last we fought for freedom; here's rich poverty,
Though wrapped in rags; my fifty brave companions—
Who, through the force of fifteen thousand foes,
Bore off their king, and saved his great remains.
Gust. Give me your hands, those valiant hands—Why, captain,
We could but die alone; with these we'll conquer,
My fellow-labourers, too—What say ye, friends?
Shall we not strike for it?
All. Death! Victory or death!
No bonds, no bonds!
Arn. Spoke like yourselves—Ye men of Dalecarlia,
Brave men and bold! whom every future age,
Tongues, nations, languages, and rolls of fame,
Shall mark for wondrous deeds, achievements won
From honour's dangerous summit, warriors all
Say, might ye choose a chief, for high exploits,

From the first annal, to the latest praise
That breathes a hero's name—Speak, name the man
Who then should meet your wish?
Siv. Forbear the theme.
Why wouldst thou seek to sink us with the weight
Of grievous recollection? O Gustavus!
Could the dead wake, thou wert that man of men,
First of the foremost!
Gust. Didst thou know Gustavus?
Siv. Know him! O Heaven! what else, who else, was worth
The knowledge of a soldier? That great day,
When Cristiern, in his third attempt on Sweden,
Had summed his powers, and weighed the scale of fight;
On the bold brink, the very push of conquest,
Gustavus rushed, and bore the battle down,
In his full sway of prowess, like leviathan
That scoops his foaming progress on the main,
And drives the shoals along. Forward I sprung,
All emulous, and labouring to attend him;
Fear fled before, behind him Rout grew loud,
And distant Wonder gazed. At length he turned,
And having eyed me with a wondrous look
Of sweetness mixed with glory—grace inestimable!
He plucked this bracelet from his conquering arm,
And bound it here—My wrist seemed treble nerved;
My heart spoke to him; and I did such deeds
As best might thank him—But from that blessed day
I never saw him more—Yet, still, to this
I bow, as to the relicks of my saint:
Each morn I drop a tear on every bead,
Count all the glories of Gustavus o'er,
And think I still behold him.
Gust. Rightly thought;
For so thou dost, my soldier.
Give me my arms—Off, off, ye dark disguises!
For I will be myself. Behold your general,
Gustavus! Come once more to lead ye on
To laurelled victory, to fame, to freedom!
1 *Dale.* Is it?
2 *Dale.* Yes.
3 *Dale.* No.
4 *Dale.* 'Tis he!
5 *Dale.* 'Tis he!
6 *Dale.* 'Tis he! [*A shout.*
Siv. Strike me, ye powers!—It is illusion all!
It cannot.
Gust. What! no nearer?
Siv. It is! It is! [*Falls and embraces his knees.*
Gust. O speechless eloquence!
Rise to my arms, my friend.
Siv. Friend! said you, friend?
O my heart's lord! My conqueror! my—
Gust. Approach, my fellow soldiers! your Gustavus
Claims no precedence here: Friendship like mine
Throws all respect behind it—'tis enough
I read your joys, your transports in your eyes;
And would, O, would I had a life to spend,
For every soldier here! whose every life's
Far dearer than my own; dearer than aught,
Except your liberty, except your honour.
Perish Gustavus, ere this sacred sun,
That lights the rest of Sweden to their shame,
Should blush upon your chains! why said I chains?
To souls like yours, I should have talked of triumphs,
Empire, and fame, and hazards imminent,
Occasions wished for, glory—haste, brave men!
Collect your friends to join us on the instant;
Summon our brethren to their share of conquest,
And let loud Echo, from her circling hills,
Sound Freedom, till the undulation shake
The bound of utmost Sweden!
[*Exeunt Dalecarlians, crying* GUSTAVUS! GUSTAVUS! *Liberty!*

Enter ANDERSON.

And. There was a glorious sound!
Gust. Yes, Anderson,
The long-wished hour is come—the storm is up,
And wrecks will follow—Where they are to light
Let Heaven determine.—Well, my noble friend,
Has Peterson set out?
And. He has, this instant;
And bears your packet to the tyrant's camp.
Gust. What think you of his zeal?
And. In truth, my lord,
It wears a gallant show.
Gust. 'Tis specious all,
Flash without fire, the lightning of a cloud,
That carries darkness in the rear—For Peterson,
To spread my letters through the camp of Cristiern,
And seek for succours in the jaws of death,
It showed too bold, too much the flaming patriot.
Beside, I know him for the friend of Trollio.
And. Why would you then employ him?
Gust. There's the mystery.
'Tis not his faith, but treachery I trust to.
My letters are directed to the chiefs
Of those inglorious mercenary Swedes,
Whom Cristiern had seduced to join his host,
And turn the sword of conquest on their country;
To each of those I have addressed in terms
Of special correspondence, meant to rouse
The jealousy of Cristiern; as I think
My packet can't escape him. What ensues?
The tyrant hence concludes himself betrayed,
Sifts all his legions, thins the ranks of fight,
And leaves them open to our bold invasion.
But grant that Peterson deceive my aim,
And hold the rank of virtue; then the Swedes
May waken to the glorious call of honour.
So—every way it saves us from the guilt
Of Swedes encountering Swedes, and spares the blood
Of brethren, though revolted.
And. On my soul,
This is a stratagem that saps the miner,
Makes treason turn a traitor to itself,
And mock its own designs.

Gust. O noble friend, fast winds the great machine,
That strikes the fate of Sweden—Go, my Anderson,
Assemble all thy brave adherents round thee;
With warlike inspiration warm their souls,
And haste to join me here.
And. I will, my lord. [*Exit.*

Enter LAERTES.

Laer. Thy presence nobly speaks the man I wish. Gustavus!
Gust. Yes; thou hast a hostile garb—
Ha! say—Art thou Laertes? If I err not,
There is a friendly semblance in that face,
Which answers to a fond impression here,
And tells me I'm thy debtor——my deliverer!
Laer. No, valiant prince, you over-rate my service;
There is a worthier object of your gratitude
Whom yet you know not—Oh, I have to tell—
But then, to gain your credit, must unfold,
What haply should be secret——Be it so;
You are all honour.
Gust. Let me to thy mind!
For thou hast waked my soul into a thought
That holds me all attention.
Laer. Mightiest man!
To me alone you held yourself obliged
For life and liberty——Had it been so,
I were most blessed, with retribution just
To pay thee for my own—For on the day,
When by your arm the mighty Thraces fell,
Fate threw me to your sword—You spared my youth,
And, in the very whirl and rage of fight,
Your eye was taught compassion—from that hour
I vowed my life the slave of your remembrance;
And often, as Cristina, heavenly maid!
The mistress of my service, questioned me
Of wars and venturous deeds, my tidings came
Still freighted with thy name, until the day
In which yourself appeared, to make praise speechless.
Cristina saw you then, and on your fate
Dropped a kind tear; and when your noble scorn
Of proffered terms provoked her father's rage
To take the deadly forfeit, she, she only,
Whose virtues watched the precious hour of mercy,
All trembling, sent my secret hand to save you;
Where, through a pass unknown to all your keepers,
I led you forth, and gave you to your liberty.
Gust. O I am sunk, o'erwhelmed with wondrous goodness!
But were I rich and free as opening mines,
That team their golden wealth upon the world,
Still I were poor, unequal to her bounty.
Nor can I longer doubt whose generous arm,
In my Arvida, in my friend's deliverance,
Gave double life, and freedom to Gustavus.
Laer. A fatal present! Ah, you know him not;
Arvida is misled, undone by passion;
False to your friendship, to your trust unfaithful.
Gust. Ha! hold!
Laer. I must unfold it.
Gust. Yet forbear:
This way—I hear some footing—pray you soft—
If thou hast aught to urge against Arvida,
The man of virtue, tell it not the wind;
Lest slander catch the sound, and guilt should triumph. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

ARVIDA *entering speaks to a Soldier.*

Arv. He's here——bear back your orders to your fellows,
That not a man, on peril of his life,
Advance in sight till called.
Sold. My lord, I will. [*Exit.*
Arv. Have I not vowed it, faithless as he is,
Have I not vowed his fall! Yet, good Heaven!
Why start these sudden tears? On, on I must,
For I am half way down the dizzy steep,
Where my brain turns—A draught of Lethe now—
O that the world would sleep—to wake no more!
Or that the name of friendship bore no charm
To make my nerve unsteady, and this steel
Fly backward from its task! It shall be done.
Empire! Cristina! though the affrighted sun
Start back with horror of the direful stroke,
It shall be done. Calm, calm the hell within,
Thy looks may else turn traitors—Ha, he comes!
How steadily he looks, as Heaven's own book,
The leaf of truth, were opened on his aspect.
Up, up, dark minister——his fate calls out
[*Puts up the dagger.*
To nobler execution; for he comes
In opposition, singly, man to man,
As though he braved my wish.

Enter GUSTAVUS.

[*They look for some time on each other*—ARVIDA *lays his hand on his sword, and withdraws it by turns—then advances irresolutely.*
Gust. Is it then so?
Arv. Defend thyself!
Gust. No! Strike!
I would unfold my bosom to thy sword,
But that I know the wound you give this breast
Would doubly pierce thy own.
Arv. I know thee not—
It is the time's eclipse, and what should be
In nature, now is nameless.
Gust. Ah, my brother!
Arv. What wouldst thou?
Gust. Is it thus we two should meet?
Arv. Art thou not false? Deep else, O deep indeed
Were my damnation!
Gust. Dear, unhappy man!
My heart bleeds for thee. False I had surely been,
Had I, like thee, been tempted.
Arv. Ha! speak, speak!
Didst thou not send to treat with Cristiern?
Gust. Never.
I know thy error, but I know the arts,

The frauds, the wiles that practised on thy virtue;
Firm how you stood, and towered above mortality;
'Till, in the fond unguarded hour of love,
The wily undermining Trollio came,
And won thee from thyself—a moment won thee;
For still thou art Arvida, still the man
On whom thy country calls for her deliverance.
Already are her bravest sons in arms;
Hark how they shout, impatient for our presence,
To lead them on to a new life of liberty,
To fame, to conquest—Ha! Heaven guard my brother!
Thy cheek turns pale, thy eye is wild upon me!
Wilt thou not answer me?

Arv. Gustavus!

Gust. Speak.

Arv. Have I not dreamed?

Gust. No other I esteem it.

Where lives the man, whose reason slumbers not?
Still pure, still blameless, if at wonted dawn
Again he wakes to virtue.

Arv. O, my dawn
Must soon be dark. Confusion dissipates,
To leave me worse confounded.

Gust. Think no more on't.
Come to my arms, thou dearest of mankind!

Arv. Stand off! Pollution dwells within my touch,
And horrors hang around me—Cruel man!
O, thou hast doubly damned me with this goodness!
For resolution held the deed as done,
That now must sink me—Hark! I am summoned hence,
My audit opens! Poise me! for I stand
Upon a spire, against whose sightless base
Hell breaks his wave beneath. Down, down, I dare not,
And up I cannot look, for justice fronts me.——
Thou shalt have vengeance! though my purpling blood
Were nectar for Heaven's bowl, as warm and rich,
As now 'tis base, it thus should pour for pardon!

[GUSTAVUS *catches his arm, and in the struggle the dagger falls.*

Gust. Ha! hold, Arvida!—No, I will not lose thee——
Forbid it Heaven! thou shalt not rob me so.
No, I will struggle with thee to the last,
And save thee from thyself. Oh, answer me!
Wilt thou forsake me? Answer me, my brother,
My best Arvida!

Arv. I would speak to thee——
But let it be by silence——Oh, Gustavus!

Gust. Say but you'll live.

Arv. Oh!

Gust. For my sake.

Arv. Yes, take me;
Expose me, cage me, brand me for the tool
Of crafty villains, for the veriest slave,
On whom the bend of each contemptuous brow
Shall look with loathing! Ah, my turpitude
Shall be the vile comparative for knaves
To boast and whiten by!

Gust. Not so, not so.
Who knows no fault, my friend, knows no perfection.
The rectitude, that Heaven appoints to man,
Leads on through error; and the kindly sense
Of having strayed, endears the road to bliss;
It makes Heaven's way more pleasing. O, my brother!
'Tis hence a thousand cordial charities
Derive their growth, their vigour, and their sweetness.
This short lapse
Shall to thy future foot give cautious treading,
Erect, and firm, in virtue.

Arv. Give me leave. [*Offers to pass.*

Gust. You shall not pass.

Arv. I must.

Gust. Whither?

Arv. I know not——O Gustavus!

Gust. Speak.

Arv. You can't forgive me!

Gust. Not forgive thee!

Arv. No.
Look there! [*Points to the dagger.*
And yet, when I resolved to kill thee,
I could have died—indeed I could—for thee,
I could have died, Gustavus!

Gust. O! I know it.
A generous mind, though swayed awhile by passion,
Is like the steely vigour of the bow,
Still holds it native rectitude, and bends
But to recoil more forceful! Come, forget it.

Enter a Dalecarlian.

Dale. My lord, as now I passed the mountain's brow,
I spied some men, whose arms, and strange attire,
Give cause for circumspection.

Gust. Danes, perhaps;
Haste, intercept their passage to the camp.
[*Exit Dale.*

Arv. Those are the Danes that witness to my shame!

Gust. Perish the opprobrious term! Not so, Arvida;
Myself will be the guardian of thy fame;
Trust me, I will.—Our friends approach.—O clear,
While I attend them, clear that cloud, my brother,
That sits upon the morning of thy youth!
It hangs too near the heart of thy Gustavus.
[*Exit*

Arv. Of thy Gustavus! O wretch, wretch cursed wretch!
What is this time and place, and toys of circumstance,
That wind our actions so, as Heaven's own hand
What's done may not unravel?—Pardon may!—
There's the Lethean sweet, the snow of Heaven
New blanching o'er the negro front of Guilt,
That, to the eye of Mercy, all appears
Fair as the unwritten page—yet, self-convict,

Though Heaven's free power should pardon, where's my peace?
Thus, thus to be driven out from my own breast!
To have no shed, no sheltering nook at home,
To take reflection in! How looks the wretch
Whose heart cries 'Villain' to itself? I'll not
Endure its battery—Something must be done,
Of high import, ere night, that I may sleep,
Or wake for ever.

Enter GUSTAVUS, *followed by the Dalecarlians*, ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, SIVARD, *Officers, &c.*

1 *Dale.* Let us all see him!
2 *Dale.* Yes, and hear him too.
3 *Dale.* Let us be sure 'tis he himself.
4 *Dale.* Our general.
5 *Dale.* And we will fight while weapons can be found.
6 *Dale.* Or hands to wield them.
7 *Dale.* Get on the bank, Gustavus.
And. Do, my lord.
Gust. My countrymen!———
1 *Dale.* Ho! hear him!
2 *Dale.* Peace!
3 *Dale.* Peace!
4 *Dale.* Peace!
Gust. Amazement, I perceive, hath filled your hearts,
And joy, for that your lost Gustavus, 'scaped,
Through wounds, imprisonments, and chains, and deaths,
Thus sudden, thus unlooked for, stands before ye!
As one escaped from cruel hands I come,
From hearts that ne'er knew pity, dark and vengeful,
Who quaff the tears of orphans, bathe in blood,
And know no music but the groans of Sweden!
Yet, not for that my sister's early innocence,
And mother's age, now grind beneath captivity;
Nor that one bloody, one remorseless hour,
Swept my great sire and kindred from my side;
For them Gustavus weeps not; though my eyes
Were far less dear, for them I will not weep.—
But, O great parent, when I think on thee!
Thy numberless, thy nameless, shameful infamies,
My widowed country! Sweden! when I think
Upon thy desolation, spite of rage——
And vengeance, that would choak them——tears will flow!
And. O, they are villains, every Dane of them.
Practised to stab and smile—to stab the babe
That smiles upon them!
Arn. What accursed hours
Roll o'er those wretches, who, to fiends like these,
In their dear liberty, have bartered more
Than worlds will rate for?
Gust. O Liberty! Heaven's choice prerogative!
True bond of law, thou social soul of property,
Thou breath of reason, life of life itself!
For thee the valiant bleed! O sacred Liberty!
Winged from the summer's snare, from flattering ruin,
Like the bold stork you seek the wintry shore,
Leave courts, and pomps, and palaces, to slaves,
Cleave to the cold, and rest upon the storm!
Upborn by thee, my soul disdained the terms
Of empire—offered at the hands of tyrants!
With thee, I sought this favourite soil; with thee,
These favourite sons I sought—thy sons, O Liberty!
For, even amid the wilds of life, you lead them,
Lift their low rafted cottage to the clouds,
Smile o'er their heaths, and from their mountain tops
Beam glory to the nations!
All. Liberty! Liberty!
Gust. Are ye not marked, ye men of Dalecarlia,
Are ye not marked by all the circling world,
As the great stake, the last effort for liberty?
Say, is it not your wealth, the thirst, the food,
The scope, and bright ambition, of your souls?
Why else have you, and your renowned forefathers,
From the proud summit of their glittering thrones
Cast down the mightiest of your lawful kings,
That dared the bold infringement? What, but liberty,
Through the famed course of thirteen hundred years,
Aloof hath held invasion from your hills,
And sanctified their shade?—And will ye, will ye
Shrink from the hopes of the expecting world,
Bid your high honours stoop to foreign insult,
And, in one hour, give up to infamy
The harvest of a thousand years of glory?
1 *Dale.* No!
2 *Dale.* Never, never!
3 *Dale.* Perish all first!
4 *Dale.* Die all!
Gust. Yes, die by piecemeal!
Leave not a limb o'er which a Dane may triumph!
Now, from my soul, I joy, I joy, my friends,
To see ye feared: to see that even your foes
Do justice to your valour!—There they be,
The power of kingdoms, summed in yonder host,
Yet kept aloof, yet trembling to assail ye!
And, Oh! when I look round, and see you here,
Of number short, but prevalent in virtue,
My heart swells high, and burns for the encounter:
True courage but from opposition grows;
And what are fifty, what a thousand slaves,
Matched to the sinew of a single arm,
That strikes for liberty?—That strikes to save
His fields from fire, his infants from the sword,
His couch from lust, his daughters from pollution,
And his large honours from eternal infamy?
What doubt we then? Shall we, shall we stand here,
Till motives, that might warm an ague's frost,
And nerve the coward's arm, shall poorly serve,
To wake us to resistance? Let us on!
O, yes, I read your lovely fierce impatience:
You shall not be withheld; we will rush on them.
This is, indeed, to triumph, where we hold
Three kingdoms in our toil! Is it not glorious,

Thus to appal the bold, meet force with fury,
And push yon torrent back, till every wave
Flee to its fountain?

3 *Dale.* On! lead us on, Gustavus! one word more
Is but delay of conquest.

Gust. Take your wish.
He, who wants arms, may grapple with the foe,
And so be furnished. You, most noble Anderson,
Divide our powers, and, with the famed Olaus,
Take the left rout.—You, Eric, great in arms!
With the renowned Nederbi, hold the right,
And skirt the forest down; then wheel at once,
Confessed to view, and close upon the vale:
Myself, and my most valiant cousin here,
The invincible Arvida, gallant Sivard,
Arnoldus, and these hundred hardy veterans,
Will pour directly on, and lead the onset.
Joy, joy, I see confessed from every eye!
Your limbs tread vigorous, and your breasts beat high!
Thin though our ranks, though scanty be our bands,
Bold are our hearts, and nervous are our hands!
With us, truth, justice, fame, and freedom close,
Each, singly, equal to an host of foes.
I feel, I feel them fill me out for fight,
They lift my limbs as feathered Hermes light!
Or, like the bird of glory towering high,
Thunder within his grasp, and lightning in his eye! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Before the Camp.*

Enter CRISTIERN, TROLLIO, *and Attendants.*

Crist. Your observation's just; I see it, Trollio:
Men are machines, with all their boasted freedom;
Their movements turn upon some favourite passion;
Let art but find the latent foible out,
We touch the spring, and wind them at our pleasure.

Troll. Let Heaven spy out for virtue, and then starve it!
But vice and frailty are the statesman's quarry,
The objects of our search, and of our science;
Marked by our smiles, and cherished by our bounty.
'Tis hence, you lord it o'er your servile senates;
How low the slaves will stoop to gorge their lusts,
When aptly baited! even the tongues of patriots
(Those sons of clamour) oft relax the nerve
Within the warmth of favour.

Crist. How else should kings subsist? For what is power,
But the nice conduct of another's weakness?
That thing called virtue is the bane of government,
A libel on the state, that asks suppression;
It has a hateful and unbending quality;
It serves no end, still restive to the rein,
And to the spur unspeedy: They who boast it
Are traitors, rivals of their king, my Trollio,
And, wanting other subjects, greatly dare
To lord it o'er themselves. Such is Gustavus,
If yet he be——
And such Arvida was; though now, I trust,
He is too far advanced in our designs
To think of a retreat.

Troll. Impossible!
Already has he leaped the guilty mound,
That might appal his virtue; for the world
He dare not now look back; where shame pursues,
And cuts off all retreat.

Enter Gentleman Usher and PETERSON, *who kneels.*

Gent. My liege, lord Peterson.

Crist. Rise to our trust, most worthy Peterson,
Rise to our friendship: By my head I swear,
Bar but our Trollio here, there's not a Swede,
Who holds thy valued level in our heart!
For thou'rt unshaken, though thy nation swerve;
Faithful among the faithless.

Peter. What I am
Let this inform your majesty. [*Gives a pacquet.*

Troll. A pacquet?
Whence had you that, my friend?

Peter. Even from the hands
Of the once great Gustavus.

Crist. Then you have seen him? Tell me, tell me, Peterson;
What said he? Eh! how looked the mighty rebel?
His means, his scope, the pride of his presumption—
Give me the whole!

Peter. Last night, my gracious lord,
While yet I held your messenger in conference,
Arrived, who brought a letter from Gustavus,
Wherein, digesting many flagrant terms
Of mutinous import against the state
Of your high dignity, by morning light
He prayed me to attend him; boasting much
Of plenteous hopes, and means of boldest enterprise.
Of this I gave you notice; and ere dawn
Set out for fresh intelligence—I came;
I saw him shrunk, that glory of the north,
Soiled with the vileness of a slave's attire;
Where in the depth and darkness of the mines,
For six long months he hath not seen the sun.
Colleagued with circling horrors, hourly toil
Hath been his watch, and penury his earning;
But, like the lion, newly broke from bonds,
The mingling passions from his eyes dart glory;
Pride lifts his stature, and his opening front

Still looks dominion.
Crist. Who were his adherents?
Peter. The traitor Anderson, and a few friends,
To whom, ere I set out, he stood revealed,
And when I seemed to question on his powers
Of rivalship, the props whereon he meant
To lift contention to the princely front
Of such high opposition; he replied,
His powers were near your person.
Crist. How! what's here?
[*Looks on the pacquet.*
To Laurens, Aland, Haquin, and Roderic!
Confusion! Treason's in our camp!—Who's there?
Gent. My liege!
Crist. Bear this to Norbi——Bid him seize
[*Gives a signet.*
The Swedish captains.
Troll. Might I but presume——
Crist. I will not be controuled—bid him seize all,
Soldiers and chiefs! by hell, there's not a Swede,
But lurks an instrument to prompt rebellion,
And plots upon my life! Look there, 'tis evident: [*Gives* TROLLIO *a letter.*
They are all leagued, confederate with Gustavus,
The abettors of his treason.
Troll. It should seem so:
And yet it should not——Tell me, Peterson,
Art thou assured thy credit with Gustavus
Will answer to a trust like this? Ha! Say.
Peter. Yes, well assured: my zeal appeared too warm
To give the least cold colour for suspicion.
Troll. I fear, my friend, I fear he has o'erreached you.
Divide and conquer, is the sum of politics.
Beyond the dreaded circle of his sword,
Gustavus triumphs in an ample genius;
He walks at large, sees clear and wide around him;
Calm in the storm and turbulence of action,
He ponders on the last event of things,
And makes each cause subservient to the consequence.
Crist. You over-rate his craft; they're false, my Trollio,
False every Swede of them; I read their souls.

Enter CRISTINA *and* MARIANA.

Cristina. I heard it was your royal pleasure, sir,
I should attend your highness.
Crist. Yes, Cristina,
But business interferes. [*Exeunt.*

Enter an Officer.

Offi. My sovereign liege!
Wide o'er the western shelving of yon hill,
We think, though indistinctly, we can spy
Like men in motion mustering on the heath;
And there is one who saith he can discern
A few of martial gesture, and bright arms,
Who this way bend their action.

Crist. Friends, perhaps;
For foes it were too daring—Haste thee, Trollio,
Detach a thousand of our Danish horse
To rule their motions—We will out ourself,
And hold our powers in readiness—Lead on.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter CRISTINA *and* MARIANA.

Mar. Ha! did you mark, my princess, did you mark?
Should some reverse, some wondrous whirl of fate
Once more return Gustavus to the battle,
New nerve his arm, and wreathe his brow with conquest;
Say, would you not repent that e'er you saved
This dreadful man, the foe of your great race;
Who pours impetuous in his country's cause
To spoil you of a kingdom?
Cristina. No, my friend.
Had I to death, or bondage, sold my sire,
Or had Gustavus on our native realms
Made hostile inroad, then, my Mariana!
Had I then saved him from the stroke of justice,
I should not cease my suit to Heaven for pardon.
But if, though in a foe, to reverence virtue,
Withstand oppression, rescue injured innocence,
Step boldly in betwixt my sire and guilt,
And save my king, my father, from dishonour;
If this be sin, I have shook hands with penitence.
First, perish crowns, dominion, all the shine
And transience of this world, ere guilt shall serve
To buy the vain incumbrance.
Mar. Do not think
I meant, my princess, to arraign your virtues,
Howe'er I seemed to question on the consequence.
Cristina. The consequence of virtue must be good:
It must. Though it should prove my father's lot,
In being rescued from one act of guilt,
To lose the whole of all his wide dominions,
He were a gainer—Blasted be that royalty,
Which murder must make sure, and crimes inglorious!
The bulk of kingdoms, nay, the world is light,
When guilt weighs opposite—O would to Heaven,
The loss of empire would restore his innocence,
Restore the fortunes, and the precious lives
Of thousands, fallen the victims of ambition!

Enter LAERTES.

Ha! Laertes! most welcome! well—and have you! say, Laertes——
Laer. O royal maid!
Cristina. Thy looks are doubtful——Speak,
Why art thou silent——Does he live!
Laer. He does.
But death ere night must fill a long account;
The camp, the country's in confusion: War

And changes ride upon the hour, that hastes
To intercept my tongue—I else could tell
Of virtues hitherto beyond my ken;
Courage, to which the lion stoops his crest,
Yet grafted upon qualities as soft
As a rocked infant's meekness: such as tempts,
Against my faith, my country, and allegiance,
To wish thee speed, Gustavus.

Cristina. Then you found him.

Laer. I did: and warned him, but in vain; for death
To him appeared more grateful than to find
His friend's dishonour.

Cristina. Give me the manner—quick—soft, good Laertes!

Enter CRISTIERN, TROLLIO, PETERSON, *Danes, &c.*

Crist. Damned, double traitor! O cursed, false Arvida!
Guard well the Swedish prisoners, bind them hard—
Stand to your arms—Bring forth the captives there!

Enter AUGUSTA *and* GUSTAVA, *guarded.*

Troll. My liege——

Crist. Away! I'll hear no more of politics;
Fortune! we will not trust the changeling more;
But wear her girt upon our armed loins,
Or pointed in our grasp.

Enter an Officer.

Offi. The foe's at hand.
With gallant shew your thousand Danes rode forth,
But shall return no more! I marked for action,
A band of desperate resolutes rush on them,
Scarce numbering to a tenth, and in mid way
They closed; the shock was dreadful, nor your Danes
Could bear the madding charge; a while they stood;
Then shrunk, and broke, and turned——When, lo, behind,
Fast wheeling from the right and left, there poured,
Who intercepted their return, and, caught
Within the toil, they perished.

Crist. 'Tis Gustavus!
No mortal else, not Ammon's boasted son,
Not Cæsar would have dared it. Tell me, say,
What numbers in the whole may they amount to?

Offi. About five thousand.

Crist. And no more?

Offi. No more,
That yet appear.

Crist. We count six times their sum.
Haste, soldier, take a trumpet, tell Gustavus
We have of terms to offer, and would treat
Touching his mother's ransom; say, her death,
Suspended by our grace, but waits his answer.—
[*Exit Officer.*
Madam, it should well suit with your authority,
[*To* AUGUSTA.
To check this frenzy in your son—look to it,
Or by the saints this hour's your last of life!

Aug. Come, my Gustava, come, my little captive!
We shall be free; our tyrant is grown kind;
And for these chains that bind thy pretty arms,
The golden cherubim shall lend thee wings,
And thou shalt mount amid the smiling choir
Of little heavenly songsters, like thyself,
All robed in innocence.

Gustava. Will you go, mother?

Aug. So help me, mercy! Yes, I'll go, my child;
And I will give thee to thy father's fondness,
And to the arms of all thy royal race
In Heaven; who sit on thrones, with loves, and joys,
And pleasures smiling round.

Crist. Is this my answer?
Come forth, ye ministers of death, come forth!

Enter Ruffians, who seize AUGUSTA *and* GUSTAVA.

Pluck them asunder! We shall prove you, lady!
'Tis my damned lot, thus ever to be crossed
With rank blown pride, and insolence eternal.

Gustava. O mother, take me, take me from these men!
They fright me with their looks.

Aug. Alas, my child, I cannot take thee from them.

Gustava. O, they will hurt me: can't you take me, mother?

Aug. They can't, they cannot hurt you, my Gustava.
Fear not, my little one! your name should be
A charm o'er cowardice, for you are called
After your valiant brother; he'll disown you,
He will not love you, if you fear, Gustava.

Cristina. Ah! I can hold no longer. Royal sir,
Thus on my knees, and lower, lower still——

Crist. My child! What mean you?

Cristina. O my gracious father!
Kill, kill me rather—let me perish first,
But do not stain the sanctity of kings
With the sweet blood of helpless innocents;
Do not, my father! Spare the little orphans,
And let the lambs go free!

Aug. Ha! who art thou,
That look'st so like the inhabitants of Heaven,
Like mercy sent upon the morning's blush,
To glad the heart, and cheer a gloomy world
With light, 'till now unknown?

Crist. Away, they come.
I'll hear no more of your ill-timed petitions.

Cristina. O yet for pity!

Crist. I will none on't; leave me!
Pity! it is the infant fool of nature:
Tear off her hold and bear her to her tent.
[*Exeunt* CRISTINA, MAR. LAER. *and attendants.*

Enter an Officer.

Offi. My liege, Gustavus, though with much reluctance,

Consents to one hour's truce. His soldiers rest
Upon their arms, and, followed by a few,
He comes to know your terms.
Crist. I see, fall back——
Stand firm—Be ready, slaves, and, on the word,
Plunge deep your daggers in their bosoms.
[*Points to* AUGUSTA.

Enter GUSTAVUS, ARVIDA, ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, SIVARD, *&c.*

Hold!
Gust. Ha! it is, it is my mother!
Crist. Tell me, Gustavus, tell me why is this?
That, as a stream diverted from the banks
Of smooth obedience, thou hast drawn those men
Upon a dry unchannelled enterprise
To turn their inundation?—Are the lives
Of my misguided people held so light,
That thus thou'dst push them on the keen rebuke
Of guarded majesty; where justice waits,
All awful, and resistless to assert
The imperious rights, the sanctitude of kings,
And blast rebellion?
Gust. Justice! Sanctitude!
And rights! O patience! Rights! What rights, thou tyrant?
Yes, if perdition be the rule of power;
If wrongs give right; O then, supreme in mischief!
Thou wert the lord, the monarch of the world!
Too narrow for thy claim. But if thou think'st
That crowns are vilely propertied, like coin,
To be the means, the specialty of lust,
And sensual attribution—If thou think'st,
That empire is of titled birth, or blood;
That nature, in the proud behalf of one,
Shall disenfranchise all her lordly race,
And bow her general issue to the yoke
Of private domination—then, thou proud one,
Here know me for thy king! Howe'er be told,
Not claim hereditary, not the trust
Of frank election,
Not even the high anointing hand of Heaven
Can authorize oppression; give a law
For lawless power; wed faith to violation;
On reason build misrule, or justly bind
Allegiance to injustice. Tyranny
Absolves all faith; and who invades our rights,
Howe'er his own commence, can never be
But an usurper—But for thee, for thee
There is no name!—thou hast abjured mankind;
Dashed safety from thy bleak unsocial side,
And waged wild war with universal nature!
Crist. Licentious traitor! thou canst talk it largely:
Who made thee umpire of the rights of kings,
And power, prime attribute; as on thy tongue
The poise of battle lay, and arms of force
To throw defiance in the front of duty?
Look round, unruly boy! thy battle comes,
Like raw, disjointed must'ring; feeble wrath!
A war of waters borne against the rock
Of our firm continent, to fume, and chafe,
And shiver in the toil.
Gust. Mistaken man!
I come, empowered and strengthened in thy weakness.
For though the structure of a tyrant's throne
Rise on the necks of half the suffering world,
Fear trembles in the cement: Prayers and tears,
And secret curses, sap its mouldring base,
And steal the pillars of allegiance from it;
Then, let a single arm but dare the sway,
Headlong it turns, and drives upon destruction.
Troll. Profane, and alien to the love of heaven!
Art thou still hardened to the wrath divine,
That hangs o'er thy rebellion?—Know'st thou not
Thou art at enmity with grace? Cast out,
Made an anathema, a curse enrolled
Among the faithful, thou and thy adherents
Shorn from our holy church, and offered up
As sacred to damnation?
Gust. Yes, I know,
When such as thou, with sacrilegious hand,
Seize on the apostolic key of heaven,
It then becomes a tool for crafty knaves
To shut out virtue, and unfold those gates,
That heaven itself had barred against the lusts
Of avarice and ambition. Soft, and sweet,
As looks of charity, or voice of lambs
That bleat upon the morning, are the words
Of Christian meekness! Mission all divine!
The law of love sole mandate——but your gall,
Ye Swedish prelacy! Your gall hath turned
The words of sweet, but indigested peace,
To wrath and bitterness——Ye unhallowed men!
In whom vice sanctifies, whose precepts teach
Zeal without truth, religion without virtue;
Who ne'er preach Heaven but with a downward eye,
That turns your souls to dross; who, shouting, loose
The dogs of hell upon us—thefts, and rapes,
Sacked towns, and midnight howlings through the realm
Receive your sanction——O 'tis glorious mischief,
When vice turns holy, puts religion on,
Assumes the robe pontifical, the eye
Of saintly elevation, blesseth sin,
And makes the seal of sweet offended heaven
A sign of blood, a label for decrees,
That hell would shrink to own!——
Crist. No more of this.
Gustavus, wouldst thou yet return to grace,
And hold thy motions in the sphere of duty,
Acceptance might be found.
Gust. Imperial spoiler!
Give me my father, give me back my kindred,
Give me the fathers of ten thousand orphans,
Give me the sons in whom thy ruthless sword
Has left our widows childless! Mine they were,
Both mine, and every Swede's, whose patriot breast
Bleeds in his country's wounds! O thou canst not!

Thou hast out-sinned all reckoning! Give me then
My all that's left, my gentle mother there,
And spare yon little trembler!
Crist. Yes, on terms
Of compact, and submission.
Gust. Ha! with thee?
Compact with thee! and mean'st thou for my country,
For Sweden! No—so hold my heart but firm,
Altho' it wring for't; though blood drop for tears,
And at the sight my straining eyes start forth—
They both shall perish first.
Crist. Slaves, do your office.
Gust. Hold yet!—Thou can'st not be so damned! my mother!
I dare not ask thy blessing—Where's Arvida?
Where art thou? Come, my friend, thou'st known temptation——
And therefore best can'st pity, or support me.
Arv. Alas! I shall but serve to weigh thee downward,
To pull thee from the dazzling, sightless height,
At which thy virtue soars. For, O Gustavus,
My soul is dark, disconsolate and dark;
Sick to the world, and hateful to myself,
I have no country now; I've nought but thee,
And should yield up the interest of mankind,
Where thine's in question.
Aug. See, my son relents;
Behold, O king! yet spare us but a moment;
His little sister shall embrace his knees,
And these fond arms, around his duteous neck,
Shall join to bend him to us.
Crist. Could I trust ye——
Arv. I'll be your hostage.
Crist. Granted.
Gust. Hold, my friend.
[*Here* ARVIDA *breaks from* GUSTAVUS, *and passes to* CRISTIERN'S *Party, while* AUGUSTA *and* GUSTAVA *go over to* GUSTAVUS.
Aug. Is it then given, yet given me, ere I die,
To see thy face, Gustavus? thus to gaze,
To touch, to fold thee thus!—My son, my son!
And have I lived to this? It is enough.
All armed, and in thy country's precious cause
Terribly beauteous, to behold thee thus!
Why, 'twas my only, hourly suit to heaven,
And now 'tis granted. O my glorious child!
Blessed were the throes I felt for thee, Gustavus!
For from the breast, from out your swathing bands,
You stepped the child of honour.
Gust. O my mother!
Aug. Why stands that water trembling in thy eye?
Why heaves thy bosom? Turn not thus away!
'Tis the last time that we must meet, my child,
And I will have thee whole. Why, why, Gustavus,
Why is this form of heaviness? For me
I trust it is not meant; you cannot think
So poorly of me: I grow old, my son,
And to the utmost period of mortality,
I ne'er should find a death's hour like to this,
Whereby to do thee honour.
Gust. Roman patriots!
Ye Decii, self-devoted to your country
You gave no mothers up! Will annals yield
No precedent for this, no elder boast,
Whereby to match my trial?
Aug. No, Gustavus;
For heaven still squares our trial to our strength,
And thine is of the foremost——Noble youth!
Ev'n I, thy parent, with a conscious pride,
Have often bowed to thy superior virtues.
O, there is but one bitterness in death,
One only sting——
Gust. Speak, speak!
Aug. 'Tis felt for thee.
Too well I know thy gentleness of soul,
Melting as babes; even now the pressure's on thee,
And bends thy loveliness to earth—O, child!
The dear but sad foretaste of thy affliction
Already kills thy mother—But, behold,
Behold thy valiant followers, who to thee,
And to the faith of thy protecting arm,
Have given ten thousand mothers, daughters too;
Who in thy virtue yet may learn to bear
Millions of free-born sons to bless thy name,
And pray for their deliverer—O farewell!
This, and but this, the very last adieu!
Heaven sit victorious on thy arm, my son!
And give thee to thy merits!
Crist. Ah, thou traitress!
Gustava. O brother, a'n't you stronger than that man?
Don't let him take my mother.
Aug. See, Gustavus,
My little captive waits for one embrace.
Gust. Come to my arms, thou lamb-like sacrifice!
O that they were of force to hold thee ever,
To let thee to my heart! there lock thee close,
And circle thee with life! But 'twill not be!
Gustava. I'll stay with you, my brother.
Gust. Killing innocence!
That I was born to see this hour!
The pains of hell are on me!—Take her, mother!
Gustava. I will not part with you, indeed, I will not!
Gust. Take her——Distraction! Haste, my dearest mother:
Oh—else I shall run mad—quite mad, and save ye.
Arv. Hold, madam; hear me, thou most dear Gustavus!
Thus low I bend my prayer, reject me not:
If once, if ever, thou didst love Arvida,
O leave me here to answer to the wrath
Of this fell tyrant. Save thy honoured mother,
And that sweet lamb, from slaughter!
Gust. Cruel friendship!
Crist. And, by my life, I'd take thee at thy word,
Thou doubly damned! but that I know 'twould please thee.

Aug. No, generous prince, thy blood shall never be
The price of our dishonour. Come, my child;
Weep not, sweet babe! there shall no harm come nigh thee.
Crist. 'Tis well, proud dame; you are returned, I see—
Each to his charge—Here break we off, Gustavus;
For to the very teeth of thy rebellion
We dash defiance back.
Gust. Alas, my mother!
Grief choaks up utterance, else I have to say
What never tongue unfolded—Yet return!
Come back, and I will give up all to save thee!
For, on the covering of thy sacred head,
My heart drops blood. Thou fountain of my life!
Dearer than mercy is to kneeling penitence,
My earliest blessing, first and latest joy;
Return, return, and save thy lost Gustavus!
Crist. No more, thou trifler!
Aug. O farewell for ever!
[*Exeunt* CRISTIERN *and his party.* GUSTAVUS *and his party remain.*
Gust. Then she is gone—Arvida! Anderson!
For ever gone—Arnoldus, friends, where are ye?
Help here, heave, heave this mountain from me—O——
Heaven keep my senses!——So—We will to battle;
But let no banners wave—Be still, thou trump!
And every martial sound that gives the war
To pomp or levity; for vengeance now
Is clad with heavy arms, sedately stern,
Resolved, but silent as the slaughtered heaps
O'er which my soul is brooding.
Arn. O Gustavus!
Is there a Swede of us, whose sword and soul
Grapples not to thee, as to all they hold
Of earthly estimation? Said I more,
It were but half my thought.
And. On thee we gaze,
As one unknown till this important hour,
Pre-eminent of men!
Siv. Accursed be he,
Who, in thy leading, will not fight, and strive,
And bleed, and gasp, with pleasure!
And. We are thine;
All, all, both we and ours; whom thou this day
Hast dearly purchased.
Arn. Though, to yield us up,
Had scarce been less than virtue.
Gust. O my friends!
I see, 'tis not for man to boast his strength
Before the trial comes—This very hour,
Had I a thousand parents, all seemed light
When weighed against my country; and but now,
One mother seemed of weight to poise the world,
Though conscious truth and reason were against her.
For, O, howe'er the partial passions sway,
High Heaven assigns but one unbiassed way;
Direct through every opposition leads,
Where shelves decline, and many a steep impedes.
Here hold we on—though thwarting fiends alarm,
Here hold we on—though devious Syrens charm;
In Heaven's disposing power events unite,
Nor aught can happen wrong to him who acts aright. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Royal Tent.*

Enter CRISTINA *and* MARIANA.

Cristina. Hark! Mariana, list!—No—All is silent—
It was not fancy sure— didst thou hear aught?
Mar. Too plain, the voice of terror seized my ear,
And my heart sinks within me.
Cristina. O, I fear
The war is now at work—As winds, methought,
Long borne through hollow vaults, the sound approached;
One sound, yet laden with a thousand notes
Of fearful variation; then it swelled
To distant shouts, now coming on the gale;
Again, borne backward with a parting groan,
All sunk to horrid stillness.
Mar. Look, my princess!
Ah, no! withhold thy eyes! the place grows dark,
A sudden cloud of sorrow stains the day,
And throws its gloom around.

Enter four Slaves, bearing the Bodies of AUGUSTA *and* GUSTAVA *on a bier covered.—Four Women, in chains, follow weeping.*

Cristina. Whence are ye, say, you daughters of affliction?
Their speech is in their tears—Avert, ye saints!
Avert that thought! soft! hold ye! I've a tear
For every mourner—Ah!
[*Looks under the covering.*
Mar. What mean you, madam?
Cristina. Reflection, come not there! See it not, eyes!—
How art thou spilt, thou blood of royalty!
Close at the paleness of its parent breast
The babe lies slaughtered. Tell me, who did this:
No, hold ye! Say not that my father did it;
For duty then turns rebel—Cruel father!
O, that some villager, whose early toil
Lifts the penurious morsel to his mouth,

Had claimed my birth! Ambition had not then
Thus stepped 'twixt me and Heaven.
Mar. Go, bear it hence—
Turn, turn, my royal mistress!
Cristina. Ah, Augusta!
Among thy foes thou'rt fallen, thou'rt fallen in virtue!
Exalt thyself, O Guilt! for here the good
Have none who may lament them. Sit we down;
For I grow weary of the world; let death
Within his vaulted durance, dark and still,
Receive me too; and where the afflicted rest,
There fold me in for ever.

Enter LAERTES.

Laer. Arise, Cristina; fly, thou royal virgin!
This morn beheld thee mistress of the north,
Bright heir of Scandinavia; and this hour
Has left thee not, throughout thy wide dominions,
Whereon to rest thy foot.
Cristina. Now, praise to Heaven!
Say but my father lives!
Laer. At your command
I went; and, from a neighbouring summit, viewed
Where either host stood adverse, sternly wedged;
Reflecting on each other's gloomy front.
Fell hate and fixed defiance—When, at once,
The foe moved on, attendant on the steps
Of their Gustavus—He, with mournful pace
Came slow and silent; till two hapless Danes
Pricked forth, and on his helm discharged their fury:
Then rouzed the lion! To my wondering sight
His stature grew twofold; before his eye
All force seemed withered, and his horrid plume
Shook wild dismay around; as Heaven's dread bolt,
He shot, he pierced our legions; in his strength
His shouting squadron gloried, rushing on
Where'er he led the battle—full five times,
Hemmed by our mightier host, the foe seemed lost,
And swallowed from my sight; five times again,
Like flame, they issued to the light—and thrice,
These eyes beheld him, they beheld Gustavus
Unhorsed, and by a host girt singly in;
And thrice he broke through all.
Cristina. My blood runs chill.
Laer. With such a strenuous, such a laboured conflict,
Sure never field was fought! until Gustavus
Aloud cried, Victory! and on his spear
High reared the imperial diadem of Denmark.
Then slacked the battle; then recoiled our host;
His echoed, Victory! and now would know
No bounds; rout followed, and the face of fight—
—She heeds me not.
Cristina. O, ill-starred royalty!
My father! Cruel, dear, unhappy father!
Summoned so sudden! fearful thought!
Step in, sweet mercy! For thy time was—Ha!

Enter CRISTIERN, *flying, without his helmet, in disorder, his sword broke, and his garments bloody; he throws away his sword, and speaks.*

Crist. Give us new arms of proof—fresh horses ——quick!
A watch without there—set a standard up
To guide our scattered powers! Haste, my friends, haste!
We must begone—O for some cooling stream
To slake a monarch's thrist!
Laer. A post, my liege,
A second post from Denmark says——
Crist. All's lost.
Is it not so? Begone! Perdition choak thee—
Give me a moment's solitude—Thought, thought,
Where wouldst thou lead?
Cristina. He sees me not——Alas, alas, my father!
O, what a war there lives within his eye!
Where greatness struggles to survive itself.
I tremble to approach him; yet I fain
Would bring peace to him—Don't you know me, sir?
My father, look upon me! look, my father!
Why strains your lip, and why that doubtful eye
Through fury melting o'er me? Turn, ah, turn!
I cannot bear its softness—How? nay, then,
There is a falling dagger in that tear,
To kill thy child, to murder thy Cristina.
Crist. Then thou'rt Cristina?
Cristina. Yes.
Crist. My child!
Cristina. I am.
Crist. Curse me! then curse me! Join with heaven and earth
And hell, to curse!
Cristina. Alas! on me, my father,
Thy curses be on me; but on thy head
Fall blessings from that heaven, which has this day
Preserved thy life in battle.
Crist. What have I
To do with heaven? Damnation! What am I?
All frail and transient as my lapsed dominions!
E'en now the solid earth prepares to slide
From underneath me. Nature's power cries out,
Leave him, thou universe! No—hold me, heaven!
Hold me, thou heaven! whom I've forsaken—hold
Thy creature, though accursed!
Cristina. Patience and peace
Possess thy mind! Not all thy pride of empire
E'er gave such blessed sensation, as one hour
Of penitence, though painful—Let us hence—
Far from the blood and bustle of ambition.
Be it my task to watch thy rising wish,
To smooth thy brow, find comfort for thy cares,
And for thy will, obedience; still to cheer
The day with smiles, and lay the nightly down
Beneath thy slumbers.
Crist. O thou all that's left me!

Even in the riot, in the rage of fight,
Thy guardian virtues watched around my head,
When else no arm could aid—for through my ranks,
My circling troops, the fell Gustavus rushed;
'Vengeance!' he cried, and with one eager hand
Griped fast my diadem—his other arm
High reared the deathful steel—suspended yet;
For in his eye, and through his varying face,
Conflicting passions fought——he looked——he stood
In wrath reluctant—Then, with gentler voice;
'Cristina, thou hast conquered! Go,' he cried,
'I yield thee to her virtues.'

Enter TROLLIO *and Guards, swords drawn.*

Troll. Haste, O king!
The foe has hemmed us round; O haste to save
Thyself and us!
Crist. Thy sword.
[*Takes a sword from one of the guards.*
Troll. What means my———
Crist. Villain!
Well thought, by Hell! Ha! Yes, thou art our minister,
The reverend monitor of vice—the soil,
Baneful and rank with every principle,
Whence grow the crimes of kings. First perish thou! [*Stabs him.*
Who taught the throne of power to fix on fear,
And raise its safety from the public ruin;
Fall thou into the gulph thyself hast fixed
Between the prince and people; cutting off
Communion from the ear of royalty,
And mercy from complaint—away, away!
Thy death, old man, be on thy monarch's head;
On thine, the blood of all thy countrymen,
Who fell beneath thy counsels. [*Exeunt.*

TROLLIO *attempts to rise, and then speaks.*

Troll. Thou bloody tyrant! late, too late I find,
Nor faith, nor gratitude, nor friendly trust,
No force of obligations can subsist
Between the guilty—O, let none aspire
To be a king's convenience! Has he virtues,
Those are his own; his vices are his minister's.
Who dares to step 'twixt envy and the throne,
Alike to feel the caprice of his prince,
As public detestation. Ha! I am going—
But whither? No one near! to feel! to catch!
The world but for an instant! for one ray
To guide my soul! Her way grows wonderous dark,
And down! down! down!— [*Dies.*

SCENE II.

Enter GUSTAVUS, ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, SIVARD, *&c. in triumph.* GUSTAVUS *advances, and the rest range themselves on each side of the stage.*

Gust. That we have conquered, first we bend to heaven!
And. And next to thee!
All. To thee, to thee, Gustavus!
Gust. No, matchless men! my brothers of the war!
Be it my greatest glory to have mixed
My arms with yours, and to have fought for once
Like to a Dalecarlian: like to you,
The sires of honour, of a new-born fame,
To be transmitted, from your great memorial,
To climes unknown, to age succeeding age,
Till time shall verge upon eternity,
And patriots be no more.
Arn. Behold, my lord,
The Danish prisoners, and the traitor Peterson,
Attend their fate.
Gust. Send home the Danes with honour,
And let them better learn, from our example,
To treat whom next they conquer with humanity.
And. But then for Peterson!
Gust. His crimes are great:
A single death were a reward for treason:
Let him still languish—Let him be exiled!
No more to see the land of liberty,
The hills of Sweden, nor the native fields
Of known, endeared idea.
And. Royal sir,
This is to pardon, to encourage villains;
And hourly to expose that sacred life,
Where all our safety centres.
Gust. Fear them not.
The fence of virtue is a chief's best caution;
And the firm surety of my people's hearts
Is all the guard that e'er shall wait Gustavus.
I am a soldier from my youth; yet, Anderson,
These wars, where man must wound himself in man,
Have somewhat shocking in them: trust me, friend,
Except in such a cause as this day's quarrel,
I would not shed a single wretch's blood
For the world's empire.
Arn. O exalted Sweden!
Blessed people! Heaven! wherein have we deserved
A man like this to rule us!

Enter ARVIDA *leading in* CRISTINA. *He runs to* GUSTAVUS.

Gust. My Arvida!
Arv. My king! O hail! Thus let me pay my homage. [*Kneels.*
Gust. Rise, rise, nor shame our friendship.
Arv. See, Gustavus! Behold, nor longer wonder at my frailty.
Gust. Be faithful, eyes! Ha!—Yes, it must be so.
'Tis she; for Heaven would choose no other form
Wherein to treasure every mental virtue!
Cristina. Renowned Gustavus! mightiest among men!
If such a wretch, the captive of thy arms,
Trembling and awed in thy superior presence,
May find the grace that every other finds,
For thou art said to be of wondrous goodness!
Then hear, and O excuse a foe's presumption,
While low, thus low, you see a suppliant child,

Now pleading for a father, for a dear,
Much loved—if cruel, yet unhappy—father!
Oh, let, let him escape, who ne'er can wrong thee more!
If he, with circling nations, could not stand
Against thee single; singly, what can he,
When thou art fenced with nations?
Gust. Ha! that posture!
O rise—surprised, my eye perceived it not.
Cristina! thou all formed for excellence!
I've much to say, but that my tongue, my thoughts,
Are troubled; warred on by unusual passions.
'Twas hence thou hadst it in thy power to ask,
Ere I could offer.—Come, my friend, assist,
Instruct me to be grateful. O Cristina!
I fought for freedom, not for crowns, thou fair one!
They shall sit brighter on that beauteous head,
Whose eye might awe the monarchs of the earth,
And light the world to virtue!—My Arvida!
Arv. O great and good, and glorious to the last!
I read thy soul, I see the generous conflict,
And come to fix, not trouble, thy repose.
Could you but know with what an eager haste
I sprung to execute thy late commands;
To shield this lovely object of thy cares,
And give her thus, all beauteous, to thy eyes!
For I've no bliss but thine, have lost the form
Of every wish that's foreign to thy happiness.
But, O, my king! my conqueror! my Gustavus!
It grieves me much, that thou must shortly mourn,
Even on the day in which thy country's freed,
That crowns thy arms with conquest and Cristina.
Gust. Alas! your cheek is pale—you bleed, my brother!
Arv. I do, indeed—to death!
Gust. You have undone me:
Rash, headstrong man! O, was this well, Arvida? [*Turns from him.*
Arv. Pardon, Gustavus! mine's the common lot,
The fate of thousands fallen this day in battle.
I had resolved on life, to see you blessed,
To see my king and his Cristina happy.
Turn, thou beloved, thou honoured next to Heaven!
And to thy arms receive a penitent,
Who never more shall wrong thee.
Gust. O, Arvida!
Friend! friend! [*Turns and embraces him.*
Arv. Thy heart beats comfort to me! in this breast,
Let thy Arvida, let thy friend survive.
O! strip his once loved image of its frailties,
And strip it, too, of every fonder thought,
That may give thee affliction—Do, Gustavus;
It is my last request; for Heaven and thou
Are all the care, and business——of Arvida.
[*Dies.*
Gust. Friend! brother! speak——He's gone, and here is all
That's left of him, who was my life's best treasure!
How art thou fallen, thou greatly valiant man!
In ruin graceful, like the warrior spear,
Though shivered in the dust!—So fall Gustavus!
But thou art sped, hast reached the goal before me;
And one light lapse, throughout thy course of virtue,
Shews only thou wert man, ordained to strive,
But not attain, perfection.——
Dost thou, too, weep? transcendent, loveliest maid!
Pardon a sinking heart, o'ercharged with grief,
That in thy presence will not be exiled,
Though every joy dwells round thee.
Cristina. O Gustavus!
A bosom, pure like thine, must soon regain
The heart-felt happiness that dwells with virtue;
And Heaven, on all exterior circumstance,
Shall pour the balm of peace, shall pay thee back
The bliss of nations, breathing on thy head
The sweets that live within the prayers of foes,
Subdued unto thy merits.——Fare, farewell!
Gust. Thou shalt not part, Cristina.
Cristina. O!—I must——
Gust. No, thou art all that's left to sweeten life,
And reconcile the wearied to the world.
Cristina. It will not be—I dare not hear——
Gust. You must,
I am thy suppliant in my turn—But, O!
My suit is more, much more, than life or empire,
Than man can merit, or worlds give without thee!
Cristina. Now, aid me, aid me, all ye chaster powers,
That guard a woman's weakness! 'Tis resolved;
Thy own example charms thy suit to silence.
Nor think alone to bear the palm of virtue,
Thou, who hast taught the world, when duty calls,
To throw the bar of every wish behind them.
Exalted in that thought, like thee I rise,
While every lessening passion sinks beneath me.
Adieu, adieu, most honoured, first of men!
I go, I part, I fly, but to deserve thee.
Gust. Yet stay—a moment—till my fluttering heart
Pour forth in love, in wonder pour before thee,
Thou cruel excellence—Wouldst thou, too, leave me?
Not if the heart, the arms, of thy Gustavus
Have force to hold thee!
Cristina. O delightful notes!
That I do love thee, yes, 'tis true, my lord;
The bond of virtue, friendship's sacred tie,
The lover's pains, and all the sister's fondness—
Mine has the flame of every love within it.
But I have a father! guilty if he be,
Yet is he old; if cruel, yet a father.
Abandoned now by every supple wretch,
That fed his years with flattery—I am all
That's left to calm, to soothe his troubled soul
To penitence, to virtue; and, perhaps,
Restore the better empire o'er his mind,
True seat of all dominion. Yet, Gustavus,

Yet there are mightier reasons—O, farewell!
Had I ne'er loved, I might have stayed with honour. [*Exit.*

GUSTAVUS *looks after* CRISTINA, *then turns and looks on* ARVIDA.—ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, *&c. advance.*

And. Behold, my lord, behold the sons of war,
Of triumph, turn to tears; while, from that eye,
All Sweden takes her fate—and smiles around,
Or weeps, with her Gustavus!

Arn. Wilt thou not cheer them? say, thou great deliverer!

Siv. O general!

1 *Dale.* King!

2 *Dale.* Brother!

3 *Dale.* Father!

All. Friend!

Gust. Come, come, my brothers all! Yes, I will strive
To be the sum of every title to ye,
And you shall be my sire, my friend revived,
My sister, mother, all that's kind and dear,
For so Gustavus holds ye——O, I will
Of private passions all my soul divest,
And take my dearer country to my breast;
To public good transfer each fond desire,
And clasp my Sweden with a lover's fire;
Well pleased, the weight of all her burdens bear,
Dispense all pleasure, but engross all care.
Still quick to find, to feel my people's woes,
And wake, that millions may enjoy repose.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

A TRAGI-COMIC EPILOGUE,

BY WAY OF ENTERTAINMENT. BY MR OGLE. INTENDED FOR MR WRIGHT, MRS GIFFARD, AND MRS CLIVE.

Mr Wright.

WELL, ladies, to the court your plea submit,
Box, upper-region, gallery, and pit:
Our poet, trembling for his first essay,
Fear'd to dismiss you, though you sav'd his play.
Cry'd Nell (in pity for the bashful rogue)
'Give 'em a joke! a joke was once in vogue!
Thus authors us'd in less judicious times,
When merry epilogues were thought no crimes.'
'That (said Cristina) would his ruin crown:
Nothing but virtue takes this virtuous town.
No, let his epilogue be clean and chaste:
This is the sense of every man of taste!'—
High rose the conflict in our room of state,
Where tragic kings and queens maintain debate;
When, lo! we heard, 'your pow'rs began to rise,'
Whose horrid cat-call is our worst excise!
Our inmost palace felt the loud dissention;
Where each new tragedy's a new convention.
Whence we determin'd, without further pother,
To give you, of the one, and of the other.

Mrs Giffard.

Our author on the brave and chaste relies;
He thinks, the virtuous are the only wise.
And, if his muse, with voice exalted, sings,
Of camps and courts, of ministers and kings,
Yet, be not, to the great, his rules confin'd!
His moral is a lesson to mankind.
If virtue, beauteous, vice, deform'd he draws,
You, that applaud him, sound your own applause.
Where vice, distaste, where virtue, gives delight,
Alike, who judge or paint, are just and right.
Virtue, like vice, escapes the public eye,
In humble life, yet blazes in the high.
Hence tragedy, that owns no vulgar flight,
Shines, with the king, in a mild sphere of light;
Or vagrant, with the tyrant, strains to run,
A burning comet—not a cheering sun!
That worth is worth, be by Gustavus known:
More glorious in a mine, than on a throne!
And, for Cristina might I hope a smile,
Less great was she in empire, than exile!
Some worth it shows, to aim at worthy praise,—
Then, wither not the plant that you may raise!
Crush not his youth! No!——give him age to spread:
For we have heard you rumbling o'er his head.
Fell a few flashes, with portentous blaze,
To blast th' ambitious branches of his bays;
Yet, if soft sorrows stream'd from virtuous eyes,
If rose, from gen'rous breasts, regaling sighs,
Refresh'd by the attack, the laurel stands,
And dares the loudest thunder—of your hands.

Mrs Clive.

Great the design!—I grant—the moral good!
But 'tis my weakness to be flesh and blood.
What virgin, here, so tender and so kind,
Would not her love, with her own hands, unbind?
Preliminaries settle in the dark,
And, though she lost her father, fix her spark?
Or, when she bade the attendant 'Save him! Fly!'
Would she not send a billet, by the by?
Not article? 'Tis nonsense to say, not!
Had she no feel, no guess of what is what?
At her expence the great Gustavus shines;
My lover, he!—I'd send him to the mines.——
Arvida falls!—Gustavus wails his end,

And many a spouse caresses such a friend.
Well, let him wail his death; then, rise to life;
Clasp the fond maid, too strict to be his wife!
He held her in his camp; might hold, alone;
Compulsion some humanity had shown.
Thy countrymen—will damn thee—the third day—
This is not, sure, the true Hibernian way?
But I forgive him. He's a young beginner!
Not quite a prostitute, and yet, a sinner!
Forward to please, yet awkward to delight!
He wants a kindly hand to guide him right!
A novice yet—Instruct him—He will mend—
Full many a widow wishes such a friend.
E'en married dames may think a greater curse,
The slow performer that grows worse and worse!
This, with a blush, I say, behind my fan—
Cherish the boy, you'll raise him to a man!

Mr Wright.

The cause is heard. Ye gentle and ye brave,
'Tis your's to damn him—But, you join to save—
Then, hail Gustavus, who his country freed!
Ye sons of Britain, praise the glorious Swede!
Who bravely rais'd, and gen'rously releas'd,
From blood-stain'd tyrant, and perfidious priest,
The state and church expiring at a breath!
Who held a life of slav'ry worse than death!
Reform'd religion! re-established law,
And, that you dare to praise him, hail Nassau!

MAHOMET,

THE

IMPOSTOR.

BY

MILLER.

PROLOGUE.

To point what lengths credulity has run,
What counsels shaken, and what states undone,
What hellish fury wings th' enthusiast's rage,
And makes the troubled earth one tragic stage,
What blasphemies imposture dare advance,
And build what terrors on weak ignorance,
How fraud alone rage to religion binds,
And makes a Pandemonium of our minds;
Our Gallic bard, fir'd with the glorious views,
First to his Crusade led his tragic muse,
Her power through France his charming numbers bore,
But France was deaf—for all her priests were sore.
On English ground she makes a firmer stand,
And hopes to suffer by no hostile hand:
No clergy here usurp the freeborn mind,
Ordain'd to teach, and not enslave mankind;
Religion here bids persecution cease,
Without all order, and within all peace;
Truth guards her happy pale with watchful care,
And frauds, though pious, find no entrance there.
Religion, to be sacred, must be free;
Men will suspect—where bigots keep the key:
Hooded, and trained like hawks, th' enthusiasts fly,
And the priests' victims in their pounces die.
Like whelps born blind, by mother church they're bred,
Nor wake to sight to know themselves misled;
Murder's the game—and to the sport unprest,
Proud of the sin, and in the duty blest,
The layman's but the bloodhound of the priest.
Whoe'er thou art that dar'st such themes advance,
To priest-rid Spain repair, or slavish France,
For Juda's here there do the devil's task,
And trick up slav'ry in religion's mask;
England still free, no surer means requires
To sink their sottish souls and damp their martial fires.
Britons! these numbers to yourselves you owe;
Voltaire has strength to shoot in Shakespeare's bow;
Fame led him at his Hippocrene to drink,
And taught to write with nature as to think;
With English freedom English wit he knew,
And from the inexhausted stream profusely drew:
Cherish the noble bard yourselves have made,
Nor let the frauds of France steal all our trade.
Now of each prize the winner has the wearing,
E'en send our English stage a privateering;
With your commission we'll our sails unfold,
And from their loads of dross import some gold.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MAHOMET.
MIRVAN, *his general.*
ALI, HERICIDES, AMMON, } *officers to Mahomet.*
ZAPHNA, *a captive, brought up under Mahomet.*
ALCANOR, *chief of the senate of Mecca.*
PHARON, *his friend.*

WOMEN.

PALMIRA, *a captive, brought up under Mahomet.*

SCENE,—*Mecca.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the Temple of Mecca.*

Enter ALCANOR *and* PHARON.

Alc. Pharon, no more—shall I
Fall prostrate to an arrogant impostor,
Homage in Mecca one I banished thence,
And incense the delusions of a rebel!
No—blast Alcanor, righteous Heaven! if e'er
This hand, yet free and uncontaminate,
Shall league with fraud, or adulate a tyrant.
Pha. August and sacred chief of Ishmael's senate,
This zeal of thine, paternal as it is,
Is fatal now—our impotent resistance
Controuls not Mahomet's unbounded progress,
But, without weakening, irritates the tyrant.
When once a citizen, you well condemned him
As an obscure, seditious innovator;
But now he is a conqueror, prince, and pontiff,
Whilst nations numberless embrace his laws,
And pay him adoration—even in Mecca
He boasts his proselytes.
Alc. Such proselytes
Are worthy of him—low untutored reptiles,
In whom sense only lives—most credulous still
Of what is most incredible.
Pha. Be such
Disdained, my lord; but may not the pest spread upwards,
And seize the head—Say, is the senate sound?
I fear some members of that reverend class
Are marked with the contagion, who, from views
Of higher power and rank,
Worship this rising sun, and give a sanction
To his invasions.
Alc. If, ye Powers divine!
Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers,
Who, singled out by a community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore,
Or paltry office, sell them to the foe!
Pha. Each honest citizen, I grant, is thine,
And, grateful for thy boundless blessings on them,
Would serve thee with their lives; but the approach
Of this usurper to their very walls
Strikes them with such a dread, that even these
Implore thee to accept his proffered peace.
Alc. Oh, people lost to wisdom as to glory!
Go, bring in pomp, and serve upon your knees
This idol, that will crush you with its weight.
Mark, I abjure him: by his savage hand
My wife and children perished, whilst in vengeance
I carried carnage to his very tent,
Transfixed to earth his only son, and wore
His trapping as a trophy of my conquest.
This torch of enmity, thus lighted 'twixt us,
The hand of time itself can ne'er extinguish.
Pha. Extinguish not, but smother for a while
Its fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
Thy private sufferings to the public welfare.
Oh say, Alcanor, wert thou to behold
(As soon thou may'st) this famed metropolis
With foes begirt, behold its pining tenants
Prey on each other for the means of life,
Whilst lakes of blood and mountains of the slain
Putrify the air,
And sweep off thousands with their poisonous steams,
Would thy slain children be avenged by this?

Alc. No, Pharon, no; I live not for myself:
My wife and children lost, my country's now
My family.
Pha. Then let not that be lost.
Alc. 'Tis lost by cowardice.
Pha. By rashness often.
Alc. Pharon, desist.
Pha. My noble lord, I cannot,
Must not desist, will not, since you're possessed
Of means to bring this insolent invader
To any terms you'll claim.
Alc. What means?
Pha. Palmira.
That blooming fair, the flower of all his camp,
By thee borne off in our last skirmish with him,
Seems the divine ambassadress of peace,
Sent to procure our safety. Mahomet
Has by his heralds thrice proposed her ransom,
And bade us fix the price.
Alc. I know it, Pharon:
And wouldst thou then restore this noble treasure
To that barbarian? Wouldst thou, for the frauds,
The deaths, the devastations, he brings on us,
Enrich his ruffian hands with such a gem,
And render beauty the reward of rapine?
Nay, smile not, friend, nor think that at these years,
Well travelled in the winter of my days,
I entertain a thought towards this young beauty,
But what's as pure as is the western gale,
That breathes upon the uncropt violet——
Pha. My lord——
Alc. This heart, by age and grief congealed,
Is no more sensible to love's endearments
Than are our barren rocks to morn's sweet dew,
That balmy trickles down their rugged cheeks.
Pha. My noble chief, each master-piece of nature
Commands involuntary homage from us.
Alc. I own, a tenderness unfelt before,
A sympathetic grief, with ardent wishes
To make her happy, fill my widowed bosom:
I dread her being in that monster's power,
And burn to have her hate him like myself.
'Twas on this hour I, at her modest suit,
Promised her audience in my own pavilion.
Pharon, go thou, meanwhile, and see the senate
Assembled straight—I'll sound them as I ought.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to a Room of State.*

Enter PALMIRA.

Pal. What means this boding terror, that usurps,
In spite of me, dominion o'er my heart,
Converting the sweet flower of new-blown hope
To deadly nightshade, poisoning to my soul
The fountain of its bliss?—Oh holy prophet!
Shall I ne'er more attend thy sacred lessons?
O Zaphna! much-loved youth! I feel for thee
As for myself—But hold! my final audit
Is now at hand—I tremble for the event!
Here comes my judge—now liberty or bondage!

Enter ALCANOR.

Alc. Palmira, whence those tears? trust me, fair maid,
Thou art not fallen into barbarians' hands;
What Mecca can afford of pomp or pleasure,
To call attention from misfortune's lap,
Demand and share it.
Pal. No, my generous victor!
My suit's for nothing Mecca can afford;
Prisoner these two long months beneath your roof,
I have tasted such benignity and candour,
Whilst your own hands so laboured to beguile
The anxious moments of captivity,
That oft I have called my tears ingratitude.
Alc. If aught remains, that's in my power, to smooth
The rigour of your fate, and crown your wishes,
Why, 'twould fill
The furrows in my cheeks, and make old age
Put on its summer's garb.
Pal. Thus low I bless thee. [*Kneeling.*
It is on you, on you alone, Alcanor,
My whole of future happiness depends:
Have pity then;
Pity, Alcanor, one, who is torn from all
That's dear or venerable to her soul;
Restore me, then, restore me to my country,
Restore me to my father, prince, and prophet!
Alc. Is slavery dear then? is fraud venerable?
What country? a tumultuous wandering camp!
Pal. My country, sir, is not a single spot
Of such a mould, or fixed to such a clime;
No, 'tis the social circle of my friends,
The loved community in which I'm linked,
And in whose welfare all my wishes centre.
Alc. Excellent maid! Then Mecca be thy country.
Robbed of my children, would Palmira deign
To let me call her child, the toil I took
To make her destiny propitious to her,
Would lighten the rough burthen of my own:
But no: you scorn my country and my laws.
Pal. Can I be yours, when not my own? Your bounties
Claim and share my gratitude—but Mahomet
Claims right o'er me of parent, prince, and prophet.
Alc. Of parent, prince, and prophet! Heavens! that robber,
Who, a 'scaped felon, emulates a throne,
And, scoffer at all faiths, proclaims a new one!
Pal. Oh, cease, my lord! this blasphemous abuse
Of one, whom millions with myself adore,
Does violence to my ear: such black profaneness
'Gainst Heaven's interpreter blots out remembrance
Of favours past, and nought succeeds but horror.
Alc. Oh superstition! thy pernicious rigours,
Inflexible to reason, truth, and nature,
Banish humanity the gentlest breasts.

Palmira, I lament to see thee plunged
So deep in error—
Pal. Do you then reject
My just petition? Can Alcanor's goodness
Be deaf to suffering virtue?
Name but the ransom,
And Mahomet will treble what you ask.
Alc. There is no ransom Mahomet can offer,
Proportioned to the prize. Trust me, Palmira,
I cannot yield thee up. What! to a tyrant,
Who wrongs thy youth, and mocks thy tender heart
With vile illusions and fanatic terrors!—

Enter PHARON.

What wouldst thou, Pharon?
Pha. From yon western gate,
Which opens on Moraida's fertile plains,
Mahomet's general, Mirvan, hastes to greet thee.
Alc. Mirvan, that vile apostate!
Pha. In one hand
He holds a scimitar, the other bears
An olive branch, which to our chiefs he waves,
An emblem of his suit—a martial youth,
Zaphna by name, attends him for our hostage.
Pal. [*Apart.*] Zaphna! mysterious heaven!
Pha. Mirvan advances
This way, my lord, to render you his charge.
Alc. Mirvan advance! how dare the traitor see me?
Palmira, thou retire—Pharon, be present.
[*Exit* PAL.

Enter MIRVAN.

After six years of infamous rebellion
Against thy native country, dost thou, Mirvan,
Again profane with thy detested presence
These sacred walls, which once thy hands defended,
But thy bad heart has vilely since betrayed?
Thou poor deserter of thy country's gods,
Thou base invader of thy country's rights,
What wouldst thou have with me?
Mir. I pardon thee——
Out of compassion to thy age and sufferings,
And high regard for thy experienced valour,
Heaven's great apostle offers thee in friendship
A hand could crush thee, and I come commissioned
To name the terms of piece he deigns to tender.
Alc. He deigns to tender! insolent impostor!
Dost thou not, Mirvan, blush
To serve this wretch—this base of soul as birth?
Mir. Mahomet's grandeur's in himself; he shines not
With borrowed lustre.
Plunged in the night of prejudice, and bound
In fetters of hereditary faith,
My judgment slept; but when I found him born
To mould anew the prostrate universe,
I started from my dream, joined his career,
And shar'd his arduous and immortal labours.
Once, I must own, I was as blind as thou:
Then wake to glory, and be changed like me.
Alc. What death to honour, wakening to such glory!
Pha. Oh, what a fall from virtue was that change!
Mir. Come, embrace our faith, reign with Mahomet,
And, clothed in terrors, make the vulgar tremble.
Alc. 'Tis Mahomet, and tyrants like to Mahomet,
'Tis Mirvan, and apostates like to Mirvan,
I only would make tremble—Is it, say'st thou,
Religion, that's the parent of this rapine,
This virulence and rage?—No; true religion
Is always mild, propitious, and humane,
Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,
Nor bears destruction on her chariot-wheels;
But stoops to polish, succour, and redress,
And builds her grandeur on the public good.
Mir. Thou art turned Christian, sure! some straggling monk
Has taught thee these tame lessons—
Alc. If the Christians
Hold principles like these, which reason dictates,
Which all our notions of the powers divine
Declare the social laws they meant for man,
And all the beauties and delights of nature
Bear witness to, the Christians may be right;
Thy sect cannot, who, nursed in blood and slaughter,
Worship a cruel and revengeful being,
And draw him always with his thunder round him,
As ripe for the destruction of mankind.
Mir. If clemency delights thee, learn it here.
Though banished, by thy voice, his native city,
Though, by thy hand, robbed of his only son,
Mahomet pardons thee; nay, farther, begs
The hatred burning 'twixt you be extinguished,
With reconciliation's generous tear.
Alc. I know thy master's arts: his generous tears,
Like the refreshing drops, that previous fall
To the wild outrage of o'erwhelming earthquakes,
Only forerun destruction;
Courage he has, not bravery;
For blood and havock are the sure attendants
On his victorious car.
Pha. Leagues he will make too——
Alc. Like other grasping tyrants, till he eyes
A lucky juncture to enlarge his bounds;
Then he'll deride them, leap o'er every tie
Of sacred guarantee, or sworn protection;
And when the oppressed ally implores assistance,
Beneath that mask invade the wished-for realms,
And from pure friendship take them to himself.
Mir. Mahomet fights Heaven's battles, bends the bow
To spread Heaven's laws, and to subject to faith
The iron neck of error.
Alc. Lust and ambition, Mirvan, are the springs
Of all his actions; whilst, without one virtue,
Dissimulation, like a flattering painter,
Bedecks him with the colouring of them all:
This is thy master's portrait—But no more——
My soul's inexorable, and my hate

Immortal as the cause from whence it sprang.
Mir. What cause?
Alc. The difference between good and evil.
Mir. Thou talk'st to me, Alcanor, with an air
Of a stern judge, that, from his dread tribunal,
Intimidates the criminal beneath him:
Resume thy temper, act the minister,
And treat with me as with the ambassador
Of Heaven's apostle and Arabia's king.
Alc. Arabia's king! what king? who crowned him?
Mir. Conquest;
Whilst, to the style of conqueror, and of monarch,
Patron of peace he'd add. Name then the price
Of peace and of Palmira—Boundless treasures,
The spoils of vanquished monarchs, and the stores
Of rifled provinces, are thrown before thee.
Our troops, with matchless ardour, hasten hither
To lay in ruin this rebellious city;
Stem then the rushing torrent: Mahomet
In person comes to claim a conference with thee,
For this good purpose.
Alc. Who? Mahomet?
Mir. Yes, he conjures thou'lt grant it.
Alc. Traitor! were I sole ruler here in Mecca,
I'd answer thee with chastisement——
Mir. Hot man!
I pity thy false virtue—But farewell——
And, since the senate share thy power in Mecca,
To their serener wisdoms I'll appeal.
[*Exit* MIRVAN.
Alc. I'll meet thee there, and see whose voice is victor.—
Come, Pharon, aid me to repulse this traitor;
To bear him with impunity amongst us
Is treason 'gainst ourselves——Ye sacred powers,
My country's gods, that, for three thousand years,
Have reigned protectors of the tribe of Ishmael,
Oh! support my spirit
In that firm purpose it has always held!
To combat violence, fraud, and usurpation,
To pluck the spoil from the oppressor's jaws,
And keep my country, as I found it, free!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—PALMIRA'S *Apartment.*

Enter PALMIRA.

Pal. Cease, cease, ye streaming instruments of woe,
From your ignoble toil—Take warmth, my heart!
Collect thy scattered powers, and brave misfortune.
In vain the storm-tossed mariner repines:
Were he within to raise as great a tempest
As beats him from without, it would not smooth
One boisterous surge: impatience only throws
Discredit on mischance, and adds a shame
To our affliction.

Enter ZAPHNA.

Ha! all-gracious Heaven!
Thou, Zaphna! is it thou? what pitying angel
Guided thy steps to these abodes of bondage?
Zaph. Thou sovereign of my soul, and all its powers,
Object of every fear, and every wish,
Friend, sister, love, companion, all that's dear!
Do I once more behold thee, my Palmira?
Oh, I will set it down the whitest hour,
That Zaphna e'er was blessed with!
Pal. Say, my hero,
Are my ills ended then? They are, they are:
Now Zaphna's here, I am no more a captive,
Except to him: oh, blest captivity!
Zaph. Those smiles are dearer to my raptured breast,
Sweeter those accents to my listening heart,
Than all Arabia's spices to the sense.
Pal. No wonder, that my soul was so elate,
No wonder, that the cloud of grief gave way,
When thou, my sun of comfort, wert so nigh.
Zaph. Since that dire hour, when on Sabaria's strand
The barbarous foe deprived me of Palmira,
In what a gulph of horror and despair
Have thy imagined perils plunged my soul!
Stretched on expiring corses for a while
To the deaf stream I poured out my complaint,
And begged I might be numbered with the dead,
That strewed its banks——then starting from despair,
With rage I flew to Mahomet for vengeance;
He, for some high mysterious purpose, known
To Heaven and him alone, at length dispatched
The valiant Mirvan to demand a truce:
Instant on wings of lightening I pursued him,
And entered as his hostage—fixed, Palmira,
Or to redeem, or die a captive with thee.
Pal. Heroic youth!
Zaph. But how have these barbarians
Treated my fair?
Pal. With high humanity.
I, in my victor, found a friend—Alcanor
Has made me feel captivity in nothing
But absence from my Zaphna and my friends.—
Zaph. I grieve a soul so generous is our foe:
But now, presented as an hostage to him,
His noble bearing and humanity
Made captive of my heart; I felt, methought,
A new affection lighted in my breast,
And wondered, whence the infant ardour sprang.
Pal. Yet generous as he is, not all my prayers,
Not all the tears I lavish at his feet,
Can move him to restore me——
Zaph. But he shall——
Let the barbarian know he shall, Palmira;
The god of Mahomet, our divine protector,

Whose still triumphant standard I have borne
O'er piles of vanquished infidels—that power,
Which brought unnumbered battlements to earth,
Will humble Mecca too.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, noble Mirvan,
Do my Palmira's chains sit loose upon her?
Say, is it freedom? This presumptuous senate—
Mir. Has granted all we asked, all we could wish—
The truce obtained, the gates to Mahomet
Flew open——
Zaph. Mahomet in Mecca, say'st thou?
Once more in Mecca!
Pal. Transport! bid him welcome.
Zaph. Thy sufferings then are o'er, the ebb is past,
And a full tide of hope flows in upon us!
Mir. The spirit of our prophet, that inspired me,
Breathed such divine persuasion from my lips,
As shook the reverend fathers—'Sirs,' cried I,
'This favourite of high Heaven, who rules in battle,
'Before whose footstool tributary kings
'Bow the anointed head, born here in Mecca,
'Asks but to be enrolled a senator,
'And you refuse his prayer. Deluded sages!
'Although your conqueror, he requests no more
'Than one day's truce, pure pity to yourselves!
'To save you if he can; and you—Oh shame!'—
At this a general murmur spread around,
Which seemed propitious to us——
Zaph. Greatly carried!
Go on——
Mir. Then straight the inflexible Alcanor
Flew through the streets, assembling all the people
To bar our prophet. Thither too I fled,
Urged the same arguments, exhorted, threatened,
Till they unhinged the gates, and gave free passage
To Mahomet and his chiefs—In vain Alcanor,
And his disheartened party, strove to oppose him;
Serene and dauntless, through the gazing crowd,
With more than human majesty he moved,
Bearing the peaceful olive, whilst the truce
Was instantly proclaimed—
Pal. But where's the prophet?
Mir. Reclined in yonder grot, that joins the temple,
Attended by his chiefs.
Zaph. There let us haste
With duteous step, and bow ourselves before him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to a spacious Grotto.*

MAHOMET *discovered, with the Alcoran before him.*

Mah. Glorious hypocrisy! What fools are they,
Who, fraught with lustful or ambitious views,
Wear not thy specious mask—Thou, Alcoran!
Hast won more battles, ta'en more cities for me,
Than thrice my feeble numbers had atchieved,
Without the succour of thy sacred impulse.

Enter HERCIDES, AMMON, *and* ALI.

Invincible supporters of our grandeur!
My faithful chiefs, Hercides, Ammon, Ali!
Go, and instruct this people in my name,
That faith may dawn, and, like a morning star,
Be herald to my rising:
Lead them to know and to adore my god;
But above all, to fear him—Lo, Palmira!
[*Exeunt* HERCIDES, *&c.*
Her angel-face, with unfeigned blushes spread,
Proclaims the purity, that dwells within.

Enter MIRVAN, ZAPHNA, *and* PALMIRA.

[*To* PALMIRA.] The hand of war was ne'er before so barbarous,
Never bore from me half so rich a spoil
As thee, my fair.
Pal. Joy to my heavenly guardian!
Joy to the world, that Mahomet's in Mecca!
Mah. My child, let me embrace thee—How's this, Zaphna! Thou here!
Zaph. [*Kneeling.*] My father, chief, and holy pontiff!
The god, that thou'rt inspired by, marched before me.
Ready for thee to wade through seas of danger,
Or cope with death itself, I hither hastened
To yield myself an hostage, and with zeal
Prevent thy order.
Mah. 'Twas not well, rash boy:
He, that does more than I command him, errs
As much as he who faulters in his duty,
And is not for my purpose—I obey
My god—implicitly obey thou me.
Pal. Pardon, my gracious lord, his well-meant ardour.
Brought up from tender infancy beneath
The shelter of thy sacred patronage,
Zaphna and I've been animated still
By the same sentiments: Alas, great prophet!
I have had enough of wretchedness—to languish
A prisoner here, far both from him and you;
Grudge me not then the ray of consolation
His presence beamed, nor cloud my dawning hope
Of rising freedom and felicity.
Mah. Palmira, 'tis enough; I read thy heart.
Be not alarmed; though burdened with the cares
Of thrones and altars, still my guardian eye
Will watch o'er thee as o'er the universe.
Follow my generals, Zaphna. Fair Palmira,
Retire, and pay your powerful vows to Heaven,
And dread no wrongs but from Alcanor.
[ZAPHNA *and* PALMIRA *go out separately.*
Mirvan——
Attend thou here—'Tis time, my trusty soldier,
My long-tried friend, to lay unfolded to thee
The close resolves and councils of my heart.
The tedious length of a precarious siege
May damp the present ardour of my troops,
And check me in the height of my career.
Let us not give deluded mortals leisure
By reason to disperse the mystic gloom

We have cast about us—Prepossession, friend,
Reigns monarch of the million—Mecca's crowd
Gaze at my rapid victories, and think
Some awful power directs my arm to conquest;
But whilst our friends once more renew their efforts
To win the wavering people to our interest,
What think'st thou, say, of Zaphna, and Palmira?

Mir. As of thy most resigned and faithful vassals.

Mah. Oh Mirvan! they are the deadliest of my foes.

Mir. How!

Mah. Yes, they love each other—

Mir. Well—what crime?—

Mah. What crime! dost say?—Learn all my frailty, then—
My life's a combat: keen austerity
Subjects my nature to abstemious bearings:
I have banished from my lips that traitorous liquor,
That either works to practices of outrage,
Or melts the manly breast to woman's weakness;
Or on the burning sands of desert rocks
With thee I bear the inclemency of climates,
Freeze at the pole, or scorch beneath the line.
For all these toils love only can retaliate,
The only consolation or reward,
Fruit of my labours, idol of my incense,
And sole divinity, that I adore.
Know then, that I prefer this young Palmira
To all the ripened beauties, that attend me;
Dwell on her accents, dote upon her smiles,
And am not mine but her's. Now judge, my friend,
How vast the jealous transports of thy master,
When at his feet he daily hears this charmer
Avow a foreign love, and, insolent,
Give Mahomet a rival!

Mir. How! and Mahomet
Not instantly revenge—

Mah. Ah! should he not?
But, better to detest him, know him better:
Learn, then, that both my rival and my love
Sprang from the loins of this audacious traitor.

Mir. Alcanor!

Mah. Is their father; old Hercides,
To whose sage institution I commit
My captive infants, late revealed it to me—
Perdition! I myself lit up their flame,
And fed it, till I set myself on fire.
Well, means must be employed; but see, the father;
He comes this way, and launches from his eye
Malignant sparks of enmity and rage.
Mirvan, see all ta'en care of; let Hercides,
With his escort, beset yon gate; bid Ali
Make proper disposition round the temple;
This done, return, and render me account
Of what success we meet with 'mongst the people:
Then, Mirvan, we'll determine or to loose,
Or bridle in our vengeance, as it suits.

[*Exit* MIRVAN.

Enter ALCANOR.

Mah. Why dost thou start, Alcanor? Whence that horror?
Is then my sight so baneful to thee?

Alc. Heavens!
Must I then bear this? must I meet in Mecca,
On terms of peace, this spoiler of the earth?

Mah. Approach, old man, without a blush; since Heaven,
For some high end, decrees our future union.

Alc. I blush not for myself, but thee, thou tyrant!
For thee, bad man! who com'st, with serpent-guile,
To sow dissention in the realms of peace;
Thy very name sets families at variance,
'Twixt son and father bursts the bonds of nature,
And scares endearment from the nuptial pillow!
Even truce with thee is a new stratagem.
And is it, insolent dissembler! thus
Thou com'st, to give the sons of Mecca peace,
And me an unknown god?

Mah. Were I to answer any but Alcanor,
That unknown god should speak in thunder for me;
But here, with thee, I'd parley as a man.

Alc. What canst thou say? what urge in thy defence?
What right hast thou received to plant new faiths,
Or lay a claim to royalty and priesthood?

Mah. The right, that a resolved and towering spirit
Has o'er the grovelling instinct of the vulgar.

Alc. Patience, good Heavens! have I not known thee, Mahomet,
When, void of wealth, inheritance, or fame,
Ranked with the lowest of the low at Mecca?

Mah. Dost thou not know, thou haughty feeble man,
That the low insect, lurking in the grass,
And the imperial eagle, which aloft
Ploughs the etherial plain, are both alike
In the Eternal eye!—Mortals are equal:
It is not birth, magnificence, or power,
But virtue only, makes the difference 'twixt them.

Alc. What sacred truth from what polluted lips! [*Aside.*

Mah. By virtue's ardent pinions borne on high,
Heaven met my zeal, gave me, in solemn charge,
Its sacred laws, then bade me on and publish.

Alc. And did Heaven bid thee on, and plunder too?

Mah. My law is active, and inflames the soul
With thirst of glory. What can thy dumb gods?
What laurels spring beneath their sooty altars?
Thy slothful sect disgrace the human kind,
Enervate lifeless images of men!
Mine bear the intrepid soul; my faith makes heroes.

Alc. Go, preach these doctrines at Medina, where,
By prostrate wretches, thou art raised to homage,

Mah. Hear me: thy Mecca trembles at my name;
If, therefore, thou wouldst save thyself or city,
Embrace my proffered friendship.—What to-day
I thus solicit, I'll command to-morrow.
Alc. Contract with thee a friendship! frontless man!
Know'st thou a god can work that miracle?
Mah. I do—Necessity—thy interest.
Alc. Interest is thy god, Equity is mine.
Propose the tie of this unnatural union;
Say, is it the loss of thy ill-fated son,
Who, in the field, fell victim to my rage,
Or the dear blood of my poor captive children,
Shed by thy butchering hands?
Mah. Ay, 'tis thy children.
Mark me, then, well, and learn the important secret,
Which I'm sole master of—Thy children live.
Alc. Live!
Mah. Yes—both live—
Alc. What say'st thou? Both!
Mah. Ay, both.
Alc. And dost thou not beguile me?
Mah. No, old man.
Alc. Propitious Heavens!—Say, Mahomet,—for now,
Methinks, I could hold endless converse with thee,—
Say what's their portion! liberty or bondage?
Mah. Bred in my camp, and tutored in my law,
I hold the balance of their destinies:
And now 'tis on the turn—their lives or deaths—
'Tis thine to say which shall preponderate.
Alc. Mine! can I save them? name the mighty ransom—
If I must bear their chains, double the weight,
And I will kiss the hand, that puts them on;
Or, if my streaming blood must be the purchase,
Drain every sluice and channel of my body,
My swelling veins will burst to give it passage.
Mah. I'll tell thee, then—renounce thy pagan faith,
Abolish thy vain gods, and—
Alc. Ha!
Mah. Nay, more,
Surrender Mecca to me, quit this temple,
Assist me to impose upon the world,
Thunder my Koran to the gazing crowd,
Proclaim me for their prophet and their king,
And be a glorious pattern of credulity
To Korah's stubborn tribe. These terms performed,
Thy son shall be restored, and Mahomet's self
Will deign to wed thy daughter.
Alc. Hear me, Mahomet—
I am a father, and this bosom boasts
A heart as tender as e'er parent bore.
After a fifteen years of anguish for them,
Once more to view my children, clasp them to me,
And die in their embraces—melting thought!
But were I doomed or to enslave my country,
And help to spread black error o'er the earth,
Or to behold these blood-embrued hands
Deprive me of them both—Know me, then, Mahomet,
I'd not admit a doubt to cloud my choice—
[*Looking earnestly at* MAHOMET, *for some time, before he speaks.*
Farewell. [*Exit* ALCANOR.
Mah. Why, fare thee well then—churlish dotard!
Inexorable fool! Now, by my arms,
I will have great revenge; I'll meet thy scorn
With treble retribution.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, my Mirvan,
What sayest thou to it now?
Mir. Why, that Alcanor
Or we must fall.
Mah. Fall, then, the obdurate rebel!
Mir. The truce expires to-morrow, when Alcanor
Again is Mecca's master, and has vowed
Destruction on thy head: the senate, too,
Have passed thy doom.
Mah. Those heart-chilled paltry babblers,
Placed on the bench of sloth, with ease can nod,
And vote a man to death! Why don't the cowards
Stand me in yonder plain? With half their numbers
I drove them headlong to their walls for shelter,
And he was deemed the wisest senator,
That entered first the gate; but, now they think
They've got me in the toil, their spirits mount,
And they could prove most valorous assassins.—
Well, this I like—I always owed my greatness
To opposition; had I not met with struggles,
I'd been obscure.—Enough.—Perish Alcanor!
He marbled up, the pliant populace,
Those dupes of novelty, will bend before us,
Like osiers to a hurricane.
Mir. No time
Is to be lost.
Mah. But for a proper arm;
For, however irksome, we must save
Appearances, and mask it with the vulgar.
Mir. True, my sage chief.—What think'st thou, then, of Zaphna?
Mah. Of Zaphna, say'st thou!
Mir. Yes, Alcanor's hostage—
He can, in private, do thee vengeance on him:
Thy other favourites, of maturer age,
And more discreetly zealous, would not risk it.
Youth is the stock, whence grafted superstition
Shoots with unbounded vigour. He's a slave
To thy despotic faith; and, urged by thee,
However mild his nature may appear,
Howe'er humane and noble is his spirit,
Or strong his reason, where allowed to reason,
He would, for Heaven's sake, martyr half mankind.
Mah. The brother of Palmira!
Mir. Yes, that brother,
The only son of thy outrageous foe,

And the incestuous rival of thy love.
Mah. I hate the stripling, loathe his very name;
The manes of my son, too, cry for vengeance
On the cursed sire; but then thou know'st my love,
Know'st from whose blood she sprang: this staggers, Mirvan;
And yet I'm here surrounded with a gulf
Ready to swallow me; come, too, in quest
Of altars and a throne—What must be done?—
My warring passions, like contending clouds,
When fraught with thunder's fatal fuel, burst
Upon themselves, and rend me with the shock.
And shall enervating contagious love
Hag my aspiring spirit, sink me down
To woman's shackles, make a lapthing of me?
Glory! that must not be! ambition still,
And great revenge, impetuous urge their claims,
And must be noticed. Mirvan, sound this youth,
Touch not at once upon the startling purpose,
But make due preparation.
Mir. I'll attack him
With all the forces of enthusiasm;
There lies our strength.
Mah. First, then, a solemn vow
To act whatever Heaven by me enjoins him;
Next, omens, dreams, and visions, may be pleaded;
Hints, too, of black designs, by this Alcanor,
Upon Palmira's virtue and his life.—
But to the proof.—Be now propitious, Fortune!
Then love, ambition, vengeance, jointly triumph.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A grand Apartment.*

Enter ZAPHNA *and* PALMIRA.

Zaph. Alcanor claims a private conference with us!
What has he to unfold?
Pal. I tremble, Zaphna.
Zaph. Time press'd too, did he say?
Pal. He did; then cast
A look so piercing on me, it o'erwhelmed
My face with deep confusion; this he marked,
Then, starting, left me.
Zaph. [*aside.*] Ha! this gives me fear,
That Mirvan's jealousies are too well grounded;
But I must not distract her tender bosom
With visionary terrors. [*To* PAL.] Both in private?
Pal. In private both.
Zaph. Her virtue and my life! [*Apart.*
It cannot be; so reverend a form
Could ne'er be pander to such black devices.
Pal. But let us shun it, Zaphna; much I fear
Alcanor has deceived us: dread the treachery
Of this blood-thirsty senate. Trust me, Zaphna,
They have sworn the extirpation of our faith,
Nor care by what vile means—
Zaph. My soul's best treasure,
For whose security my every thought
Is up in arms, regardless of my own;
Shun thou Alcanor's presence. This hour, Palmira,
Mirvan, by order of our royal pontiff,
Prepares to solemnize some act of worship
Of a more hallowed and mysterious kind
Than will admit of vulgar eye; myself
Alone am honoured to assist.
Pal. Alone!
Zaph. Yes, to devote myself by solemn vow
For some great act, of which my fair's the prize.
Pal. What act?
Zaph. No matter, since my loved Palmira
Shall be the glorious recompence.
Pal. Oh, Zaphna!
Methinks I do not like this secret vow.
Why must not I be present! were I with thee,
I should not be so anxious;
For trust me, Zaphna, my affection for thee
Is of that pure disinterested nature,
So free from passion's taint, I have no one wish
To have thee more than thus, have thee my friend,
Share thy loved converse, wait upon thy welfare,
And view thee with a sister's spotless eye.
Zaph. Angelic excellence!
Pal. And let me tell thee,
This Mirvan, this fierce Mirvan, gives me terrors:
So far from tendering consolation to me,
His theme is blood and slaughter. As I met him,
His eyes flamed fury, whilst in dubious phrase
He thus bespoke me—'The destroying angel
'Must be let loose—Palmira, Heaven ordains
'Some glorious deed for thee, yet hid in darkness:
'Learn an implicit reverence for its will;
'And above all, I warn thee, fear for Zaphna.'
Zaph. What could he mean? can I believe, Alcanor,
Thy fair deportment but a treacherous mask?
Yet spite of all the rage that ought to fire me
Against this rebel to our faith and prophet,
I still have held me happy in his friendship,
And bondage wore the livery of choice.
Pal. How has Heaven fraught our love-linked hearts, my Zaphna,
With the same thoughts, aversions and desires!
But for thy safety and our dread religion,
That thunders hatred to all infidels,
With great remorse I should accuse Alcanor.
Zaph. Let us shake off this vain remorse, Palmira,
Resign ourselves to Heaven, and act its pleasure.
The hour is come, that I must pledge my vow:
Doubt not but the Supreme, who claims this service,
Will prove propitious to our chaste endearments
Farewell, my love; I fly to gain the summit
Of earth's felicity—to gain Palmira. [*Exit.*

Pal. Where'er I turn me here, 'tis all suspicion.
What means this vow? Mirvan, I like thee not:
Alcanor too distracts my timorous breast:
Even Mahomet's self I dread, whilst I invoke him.
Like one benighted 'midst a place of tombs,
I gaze around me, start at every motion,
And seem hemmed in by visionary spectres.
All righteous Power, whom, trembling, I adore,
And blindly follow, oh deliver me
From these heart-rending terrors!—Ha! who's here?

Enter MAHOMET.

'Tis he! 'tis Mahomet himself! kind Heaven
Has sent him to my aid—My gracious lord!
Protect the dear, dear idol of my soul!
Save Zaphna; guard him from——
Mah. From what!—why Zaphna?
Whence this vain terror? is he not with us?
Pal. Oh, sir, you double now my apprehensions!
Those broken accents and that eager look
Shew you have anguish smothering at the heart,
And prove for once, that Mahomet's a mortal.
Mah. [*apart.*] Ha! I shall turn a traitor to myself—
Oh woman! woman!—Hear me; ought I not
To be enraged at thy profane attachment!
How could thy breast, without the keenest sting,
Harbour one thought not dictated by me?
Is that young mind, I took such toil to form,
Turned an ingrate and infidel at once?
Away, rebellious maid!
Pal. What dost thou say,
My royal lord? Thus prostrate at your feet
Let me implore forgiveness, if in aught
I have offended: talk not to me thus;
A frown from thee, my father and my king,
Is death to poor Palmira. Say then, Mahomet,
Didst thou not in this very place permit him
To tender me his vows?
Mah. [*apart.*] His vows! perdition!
How the soft traitress racks me! Rise, Palmira—
[*Apart.*] Down, rebel love! I must be calm—
Come hither;
Beware, rash maid, of such imprudent steps;
They lead to guilt. What wild pernicious errors
Mayn't the heart yield to, if not greatly watched!
Pal. In loving Zaphna sure it cannot err;
There's nothing wild, nothing pernicious—
Mah. How!
This theme delights you——
Pal. I must own it does.
Yes, my great master, for I still have thought
That Heaven itself approved of my affection,
And gave a sanction to our mutual ardours.
Can what was virtue once be now a crime?
Can I be guilty——
Mah. Yes—towards me you are—
You, nursed from infancy beneath my eye,
Child of my care and pupil of my faith,
You, whom my partial fondness still distinguished
From all the captive youths that graced my triumphs,
And you who now, without my leave, permit
A slave to bear thee from my sight for ever.
Pal. No, we both live, nay more, would die for thee:
And oh, my lord! if all that earth can offer
Of grandeur, opulence, or pleasure, e'er
Shall make me deaf to gratitude's demands,
May Zaphna's self be evidence against me,
And plead for double vengeance on my treachery!
Mah. [*apart.*] Zaphna again! Furies! I shall relapse,
And make her witness of my weakness.
Pal. Sir!
What sudden start of passion arms that eye?
Mah. Oh, nothing: pray retire a while: take courage:
I'm not at all displeased: 'twas but to sound
The depth of thy young heart. I praise thy choice:
Trust then thy dearest interests to my bosom;
But know your fate depends on your obedience.
If I have been a guardian to your youth,
If all my lavish bounties past weigh aught,
Deserve the future blessings which await you,
Howe'er the voice of heaven dispose of Zaphna,
Confirm him in the path where duty leads,
That he may keep his vow, and merit thee.
Pal. Distrust him not, my sovereign; noble Zaphna
Disdains to lag in love or glory's course.
Mah. Enough of words—
Pal. As boldly I've avowed
The love I bear that hero at your feet,
I'll now to him, and fire his generous breast,
To prove the duty he has sworn to thee.
[*Exit* PALMIRA.
Mah. Confusion! must I, spite of me, be made
The confidant of her incestuous passion?
Why could I say? such sweet simplicity
Lured down my rage, and innocently winged
The arrow through my heart. And shall I bear this?
Be made the sport of curst Alcanor's house?
Checked in my rapid progress by the sire,
Supplanted in my love by this rash boy,
And made a gentle pander to the daughter?
Perdition on the whole detested race!

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Now, Mahomet, is the time to seize on Mecca,
Crush this Alcanor, and enjoy Palmira.
This night the old enthusiast offers incense
To his vain gods in sacred Caabo:
Zaphna, who flames with zeal for Heaven and thee,
May be won o'er to seize that lucky moment.
Mah. He shall; it must be so; he's born to act
The glorious crime; and let him be at once
The instrument and victim of the murder.
My law, my love, my vengeance, my own safety,
Have doomed it so—But, Mirvan, dost thou think

His youthful courage, nursed in superstition,
Can e'er be worked—
Mir. I tell thee, Mahomet,
He's tutored to accomplish thy design.
Palmira too, who thinks thy will is Heaven's,
Will nerve his arm to execute thy pleasure.
Love and enthusiasm blind her youth:
They're still most zealous who're most ignorant.
Mah. Didst thou engage him by a solemn vow?
Mir. I did, with all the enthusiastic pomp
Thy law enjoins; then gave him, as from thee,
A consecrated sword to act thy will.
Oh, he is burning with religious fury!
Mah. But hold, he comes—

Enter ZAPHNA.

Child of that awful and tremendous power,
Whose laws I publish, whose behests proclaim,
Listen, whilst I unfold his sacred will:
'Tis thine to vindicate his ways to man,
'Tis thine his injured worship to avenge.
Zaph. Thou lord of nations, delegate of Heaven,
Sent to shed day o'er the benighted world,
Oh say in what can Zaphna prove his duty!
Instruct me how a frail earth-prisoned mortal
Can, or avenge, or vindicate a god.
Mah. By thy weak arm he deigns to prove his cause,
And launch his vengeance on blaspheming rebels.
Zaph. What glorious action, what illustrious danger,
Does that Supreme, whose image thou, demand?
Place me, oh place me, in the front of battle,
'Gainst odds innumerable! try me there;
Or, if a single combat claim my might,
The stoutest Arab may step forth and see,
If Zaphna fail to greet him as he ought.
Mah. Oh, greatly said, my son; 'tis inspiration!
But heed me: 'tis not by a glaring act
Of human valour Heaven has willed to prove thee;
This infidels themselves may boast, when led
By ostentation, rage, or brute-like rashness.
To do whate'er Heaven gives in sacred charge,
Nor dare to sound its fathomless decrees,
This, and this only's meritorious zeal.
Attend, adore, obey; thou shalt be armed
By death's remorseless angel, which awaits me.
Zaph. Speak out, pronounce; what victim must I offer?
What tyrant sacrifice? whose blood requir'st thou?
Mah. The blood of a detested infidel,
A murderer, a foe to Heaven and me,
A wretch, who slew my child, blasphemes my god,
And, like a huge Colossus, bears a world
Of impious opposition to my faith:
The blood of—curst Alcanor!
Zaph. I!—Alcanor!
Mah. What! dost thou hesitate? Rash youth, beware;
He that deliberates, is sacrilegious.
Far, far from me be those audacious mortals,
Who for themselves would impiously judge,
Or see with their own eyes; who dares to think,
Was never born a proselyte for me.
Know who I am; know on this very spot
I have charged thee with the just decree of Heaven,
And when that Heaven requires of thee no more
Than the bare offering of its deadliest foe,
Nay, thy foe too, and mine, why dost thou balance,
As thy own father were the victim claimed?
Go, vile idolater! false Mussulman!
Go seek another master, a new faith!
Zaph. Oh Mahomet!
Mah. Just when the prize is ready,
When fair Palmira's destined to thy arms——
But what's Palmira! or what's heaven to thee,
Thou poor weak rebel to thy faith and love!
Go serve and cringe to our detested foe.
Zaph. Oh pardon, Mahomet! methinks I hear
The oracle of Heaven—It shall be done.
Mah. Obey then, strike, and for his impious blood,
Palmira's charms and Paradise be thine.
[*Apart to* MIR.] Mirvan, attend him close, and let thy eyes
Be fixed on every movement of his soul.
[*Exeunt.*
Zaph. Soft, let me think—This duty wears the face
Of something more than monstrous—Pardon, Heaven!
To sacrifice an innocent old man,
Weighed down with age, unsuccoured and unarmed!
When I am hostage for his safety too!
No matter, Heaven has chose me for the duty;
My vow is past, and must be straight fulfilled.—
Ye stern relentless ministers of wrath,
Spirits of vengeance! by whose ruthless hands
The haughty tyrants of the earth have bled,
Come to my succour, to my flaming zeal
Join your determined courage;
And thou, angel
Of Mahomet, exterminating angel!
That mow'st down nations to prepare his passage,
Support my faultering will, harden my heart,
Lest nature, pity, plead Alcanor's cause,
And wrest the dagger from me!—
Ha! who comes here?

Enter ALCANOR.

Alc. Whence, Zaphna, that deep gloom,
That, like a blasting mildew on the ear
Of promised harvest, blackens o'er thy visage?
Grieve not, that here, through form, thou art confined;
I hold thee not as hostage, but as friend,
And make thy safety partner with my own.
Zaph. And make my safety partner with thy own! [*Aside.*
Alc. The bloody carnage, by this truce suspended
For a few moments, like a torrent checked

In its full flow, will, with redoubled strength,
Bear all before it——
In this impending scene of public horror,
Be then, dear youth! these mansions thy asylum:
I'll be thy hostage now, and with my life
Will answer, that no mischief shall befall thee.
I know not why, but thou art precious to me.
Zaph. Heaven, duty, gratitude, humanity!
[*Aside.*
What didst thou say, Alcanor? Didst thou say,
That thy own roof should shield me from the tempest?
That thy own life stood hostage for my safety?
Alc. Why thus amazed at my compassion for thee?
I am a man myself, and that's enough
To make me feel the woes of other men,
And labour to redress them.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] What melody these accents make!
And whilst my own religion spurs to murder,
His precepts of humanity prevail.
[*To* ALC.] Can, then, a foe to Mahomet's sacred law
Be virtue's friend?
Alc. Thou know'st but little, Zaphna,
If thou dost think true virtue is confined
To climes or systems; no, it flows spontaneous,
Like life's warm stream, throughout the whole creation,
And beats the pulse of every healthful heart.
How canst thou, Zaphna, worship for thy god
A being, claiming cruelty and murders
From his adorers? Such is thy master's god.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Oh, my relenting soul! thou'rt almost thawed
From thy resolve—I pray you, sir, no more.—
Peace, reason, peace!
Alc. [*Aside.*] The more I view him, talk with him, observe
His understanding towering above his age,
His candour, which even bigotry can't smother,
The more my breast takes interest in his welfare.
[*To* ZAPH.] Zaphna, come near—I oft have thought to ask thee,
To whom thou ow'st thy birth; whose generous blood
Swells thy young veins, and mantles at thy heart.
Zaph. That dwells in darkness; no one friendly beam
E'er gave me glimpse, from whom I am descended.
The camp of godlike Mahomet has been
My cradle and my country; whilst, of all
His captive infants, no one more has shared
The sunshine of his clemency and care.
Alc. I do not blame thy gratitude, young man:
But why was Mahomet thy benefactor!
Why was not I! I envy him that glory.
Why, then, this impious man has been a father
Alike to thee and to the fair Palmira?
Zaph. Oh!
Alc. What is the cause, my Zaphna, of that sigh,
And all that language of a smothered anguish?
Why didst thou snatch away thy cordial eye,
That shone on me before?
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Oh my torn heart!
Palmira's name revives the racking thought
Of my near blunted purpose.
Alc. Come, my friend;
The floodgates of destruction, soon thrown open,
Will pour in ruin on that curse of nations.
If I can save but thee and fair Palmira
From this o'erflowing tide, let all the rest
Of his abandoned minions be the victims
For your deliverance—I must save your blood.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Just Heaven! and is it not I must shed his blood?
Alc. Nay, tremble, if thou dar'st to hesitate.
Follow me straight.

Enter PHARON.

Pha. Alcanor, read that letter,
Put in my hands this moment by an Arab,
With utmost stealth, and air bespeaking somewhat
Of high importance.
Alc. [*Reads.*] Whence is this?—Hercides!
Cautious, my eyes! be sure you're not mistaken
In what you here insinuate.—Gracious Heaven!
Will then thy Providence at length o'errule
My wayward fate, and by one matchless blessing
Sweeten the sufferings of a threescore years!
[*After looking for some time earnestly at* ZAPHNA.
Follow me.
Zaph. Thee!—But Mahomet—
Alc. Thy life
And all its future bliss dwells on this moment.
Follow, I say. [*Exeunt* ALCANOR *and* PHARON.

Enter MIRVAN *and his attendants, hastily, on the other side of the Stage.*

Mir. [*To* ZAPH.] Traitor, turn back! what means
This conference with the foe? To Mahomet
Away this instant; he commands thy presence.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Where am I? Heavens! how shall I now resolve?
How act? A precipice on every side
Awaits me, and the first least step's perdition.
Mir. Young man, our prophet brooks not such delay;
Go, stop the bolt, that's ready to be launched
On thy rebellious head.
Zaph. Yes, and renounce
This horrid vow, that's poison to my soul.
[*Exit with* MIRVAN, *&c.*

Re-enter ALCANOR *and* PHARON.

Alc. Where is this Zaphna?—But he flies me still:
In vain I call in all the softening arts
Of pity, love, and friendship, to engage him:
His breast is seared by that impostor's precepts
'Gainst all who bid defiance to his laws.
But, Pharon, didst thou mark the baneful gloom
The somewhat like reluctance, rage, and pity,
That, blended, sat upon his pensive brow?

Pha. I did; there is something at his heart—
Alc. There is—
Would I could fathom it! This letter, Pharon,
His aspect, age, the transport that I taste,
When he is near me; the anxiety
His absence gives, do too much violence
To my distracted sense. Hercides here
Desires to see me; 'twas his barbarous hands,
That robbed me of my children; they are living,
He tells me, under Mahomet's protection,
And he has something to unfold, on which
Their destiny and mine depend. This Zaphna
And young Palmira, vassals of that tyrant,
Are ignorant from whom they are descended.
Imagination's pregnant with that thought.
My wishes mock me. Sinking with my grief,
I blindly catch at every flattering error,
And supplicate deception's self for succour.
Pha. Hope, but yet fear, Alcanor: think, my chief,
How many infants from their parents torn,
Ere conscious whose they are, attend that tyrant,
Drink in his dictates, place their being in him,
And deem him an infallible dispenser
Of Heaven's decisions.
Alc. Well, no matter, Pharon;
At noon of night conduct Hercides hither;
Thy master in the adjoining fane once more
Will importune the gods with prayers and incense,
That he may save his friends, and see his children.
Pha. Thou shalt not find thy Pharon slack in aught,
That tends to thy deliverance from this anguish.
[*Exit* PHAR.
Alc. Just Heaven! if, by erroneous thought or act,
I have drawn down your fierce displeasure on me,
Point me to right! I'll onward to its goal
With double energy, will expiate all,
That, in the days of ignorance, might offend!
Only restore my children to my care,
Give to my craving arms my hapless children,
That I may form them, turn them back from wrong,
Weed their young minds from those pernicious errors
The arch-impostor has implanted in them,
Train them in virtue's school, and lead them on
To deeds of glorious and immortal honour.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—MAHOMET'S *Apartment.*

MAHOMET *alone.*

Mah. Ambition knows not conscience——
Well, this Zaphna
Is fixed at length—I lessoned him so home,
Dealt to his young enthusiastic soul
Such promises and threats——

Enter MIRVAN.

Mirvan, what news?
Mir. Oh, Mahomet, I fear the nice-woven web
Of our design's unravelled. Ere thy spirit
Had re-inflamed young Zaphna with the thirst
Of old Alcanor's blood, he had revealed
The dreadful purpose to Hercides—
Mah. Ha!
Mir. Hercides loves the youth, and Zaphna still
Has held him as a father.
Mah. That I like not.
What does Hercides say? thinks he with us?
Mir. Oh no; he trembles at the very thought
Of this dread scene, compassionates Alcanor,
And——
Mah. He's but a half friend then, and a half friend
Is not a span from traitor. Mirvan, Mirvan,
A dangerous witness must be some way dealt with:
Am I obeyed?
Mir. 'Tis done.
Mah. Then for the rest——
Or, ere the harbinger of morrow's dawn
Gleam in the east, Alcanor, thou must set,
Or Mahomet and all his hopes must perish:
That's the first step; then, Zaphna, next for thee!
Soon as thy hands have dealt the midnight mischief,
In thy own blood the secret must be drowned.
Thus quit of son and father (those curst rivals,
Who elbow me at once in love and grandeur)
Both Mecca and Palmira shall be mine.
Oh towering prospect! how it fills the eye
Of my aspiring and enamoured soul!
Night! put on double sable, that no star
May be a spy on those dark deeds!——Well, Mirvan,
Shall we accomplish this?
Mir. We shall, my chief.
Mah. What though I seize his life, from whom she sprung?
He's not her father, as she knows it not.
Trust me, those partial ties of blood and kindred
Are but the illusive taints of education:
What we call nature is mere habit, Mirvan;
That habit's on our side; for the whole study
Of this young creature's life has been obedience,
To think, believe, and act as pleasured me.
But hold; the hour, on which our fortune hangs,
Is now at hand. While Zaphna seeks the temple,
Let us look round us, see that not a wheel
Lag in the vast machine we have at work.
It is success, that consecrates our actions;
The vanquished rebel as a rebel dies,
The victor rebel plumes him on a throne.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Temple.*

Enter ZAPHNA, *with a drawn sword in his hand.*

Zaph. Well then, it must be so; I must discharge
This cruel duty—Mahomet enjoins it,
And Heaven, through him, demands it of my hands.
Horrid, though sacred, act!—my soul shrinks back,
And wont admit conviction—Ay, but Heaven!
Heaven's call I must obey—Oh dire obedience!
What dost thou cost me! my humanity.
Why, duty, art thou thus at war with nature?

Enter PALMIRA.

Thou here, Palmira! oh! what fatal transport
Leads thee to this sad place, these dark abodes
Sacred to death? Thou hast no business here.
Pal. Oh, Zaphna, fear and love have been my guides.
What horrid sacrifice is this enjoined thee?
What victim does the god of Mahomet
Claim from thy tender hand?
Zaph. Oh, my guardian angel,
Speak, resolve me;
How can assassination be a virtue?
How can the gracious parent of mankind
Delight in mankind's sufferings? May not this prophet,
This great announcer of his heavenly will,
Mistake it once?
Pal. Oh, tremble to examine.
He sees our hearts—To doubt is to blaspheme.
Zaph. Be steady, then, my soul, firm to thy purpose,
And let religion steel thee against pity!—
Come forth, thou foe to Mahomet, and Heaven,
And meet the doom thy rebel faith deserves!
Come forth, Alcanor!
Pal. Who, Alcanor!
Zaph. Yes.
Pal. The good Alcanor?
Zaph. Why d' you call him good?
Curse on his pagan virtues! he must die;
So Mahomet commands: and yet methinks
Some other deity arrests my arm,
And whispers to my heart—Zaphna, forbear!
Pal. Distracting state!
Zaph. Alas! my dear Palmira,
I'm weak, and shudder at this bloody business.
Help me, oh help, Palmira! I am torn,
Distracted with this conflict.
Zeal, horror, love, and pity, seize my breast,
And drag it different ways. Alas! Palmira,
You see me tossing on a sea of passions;
'Tis thine, my angel, to appease this tempest,
Fix my distracted will, and teach me—
Pal. What!
What can I teach thee in this strife of passions?
Oh Zaphna! I revere our holy prophet,
Think all his laws are registered in heaven,
And every mandate minted in the skies.
Zaph. But then, to break through hospitality,
And murder him, by whom we are protected!
Pal. Oh, poor Alcanor! generous, good Alcanor!
My heart bleeds for thee.
Zaph. Know then, unless I act this horrid scene,
Unless I plunge this dagger in the breast
Of that old man, I must—I must—
Pal. What?
Zaph. Must, Palmira——
(Oh agonizing thought!) lose thee for ever.
Pal. Am I the price of good Alcanor's blood?
Zaph. So Mahomet ordains.
Pal. Horrible dowry!
Zaph. Thou know'st the curse our prophet has denounced,
Of endless tortures on the disobedient;
Thou know'st with what an oath I have bound myself
To vindicate his laws, extirpate all,
That dare oppose his progress; say then, fair one,
Thou tutoress divine, instruct me how,
How to obey my chief, perform my oath,
Yet list to mercy's call!
Pal. This rends my heart.
Zaph. How to avoid being banished thee for ever!
Pal. Oh, save me from that thought! must that e'er be?
Zaph. It must not: thou hast now pronounced his doom.
Pal. What doom?—Have I!
Zaph. Yes, thou hast sealed his death.
Pal. I seal his death!—Did I?
Zaph. 'Twas Heaven spoke by thee; thou'rt its oracle,
And I'll fulfil its laws. This is the hour,
In which he pays, at the adjoining altar,
Black rites to his imaginary gods.
Follow me not, Palmira.
Pal. I must follow;
I will not, dare not, leave thee.
Zaph. Gentle maid,
I beg thee fly these walls; thou canst not bear
This horrid scene—Oh, these are dreadful moments!
Begone—quick—this way—
Pal. No, I follow thee,
Retread thy every footstep, though they lead
To the dark gulph of death.
Zaph. Thou matchless maid!—to the dire trial then. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *draws, and discovers the inner part of the temple, with a pagan altar and images;* ALCANOR *addressing himself to the idols.*

Alc. Eternal Powers! that deign to bless these mansions,
Protectors of the sons of Ishmael,
Crush, crush this blasphemous invader's force,
And turn him back with shame! If power be your's,
Oh! shield your injured votaries, and lay
Oppression bleeding at your altar's foot!

Enter ZAPHNA *and* PALMIRA.

Pal. [*Entering.*] Act not this bloody deed! oh save him, save him!

Zaph. Save him, and lose both paradise and thee!

Pal. Ha! yon' he stands—Oh! Zaphna, all my blood is frozen at the sight!

Alc. 'Tis in your own behalf that I implore
The terrors of your might; swift, swiftly pour
Your vengeance on this vile apostate's head,
Who dares profanely wrest your thunder from you,
And lodge it with an unknown fancied god.

Zaph. Hear how the wretch blasphemes! So, now—

Pal. Hold, Zaphna!

Zaph. Let me go—

Pal. I cannot—cannot.

Alc. But if, for reasons which dim-sighted mortals
Can't look into, you'll crown this daring rebel
With royalty and priesthood, take my life!
And if, ye gracious Powers! you have aught of bliss
In store for me, at my last hour permit me
To see my children, pour my blessing on them,
Expire in their dear arms, and let them close
These eyes, which then would wish no after-sight!

Pal. His children, did he say?

Zaph. I think he did——

Alc. For this I'll at your altar pay my vows,
And make it smoke with incense.
[*Retires behind the altar.*

Zaph. Now's the time; [*Drawing his sword.*
Insulting Heaven, he flies to stones for refuge:
Now let me strike!

Pal. Stay but one moment, Zaphna.

Zaph. It must not be—unhand me.

Pal. What to do?

Zaph. To serve my God and king, and merit thee.

[*Breaking from* PALMIRA, *and going towards the altar, he starts, and stops short.*

Ha! what are ye, ye terrifying shades?
What means this lake of blood, that lies before me?

Pal. Oh, Zaphna! let us fly these horrid roofs.

Zaph. No, no—Go on, ye ministers of death;
Lead me the way: I'll follow ye.

Pal. Stay, Zaphna!
Heap no more horrors on me; I'm expiring
Beneath the load.

Zaph. Be hushed—the altar trembles!
What means that omen! does it spur to murder,
Or would it rein me back? No, 'tis the voice
Of heaven itself, that chides my lingering hand.
Now send up thither all thy vows, Palmira,
Whilst I obey its will, and give the stroke.

[*Goes out behind the altar after* ALCANOR.

Pal. What vows? Will Heaven receive a murderer's vows!
For sure I'm such, whilst I prevent not murder.
Why beats my heart thus? what soft voice is this,
That's waken'd in my soul, and preaches mercy?
If Heaven demands his life, dare I oppose?
Is it my place to judge?—Ha! that dire groan
Proclaims the bloody business is about.—
Zaphna! oh Zaphna!

Re-enter ZAPHNA.

Zaph. Ha! where am I!
Who calls me? where's Palmira? she's not here:
What fiend has snatch'd her from me!

Pal. Heavens! he raves!
Dost thou not know me, Zaphna! her, who lives
For thee alone!—Why dost thou gaze thus on me?

Zaph. Where are we?

Pal. Hast thou then discharged
The horrid duty?

Zaph. What dost thou say?

Pal. Alcanor——

Zaph. Alcanor! what Alcanor?

Pal. Gracious Heaven,
Look down upon him!
Let's be gone, my Zaphna!
Let's fly this place!

Zaph. Oh, whither fly! to whom?
D'ye see these hands? who will receive these hands?

Pal. Oh, come, and let me wash them with my tears!

Zaph. Who art thou? let me lean on thee—I find
My powers returning. Is it thou, Palmira?
Where have I been? what have I done?

Pal. I know not:
Think on't no more.

Zaph. But I must think and talk on't too, Palmira;
I seiz'd the victim by his hoary locks—
(Thou, Heaven, didst will it)
Then, shuddering with horror, buried strait
The poignard in his breast. I had redoubled
The bloody plunge—(what cannot zeal persuade!)
But that the venerable sire poured forth
So piteous a groan! looked so, Palmira——
And with a feeble voice, cried, Is it Zaphna?
I could no more. Oh! hadst thou seen, my love,
The fell, fell dagger in his bosom, viewed
His dying face, where sat such dignity,
Clothed with compassion towards his base assassin! [*Throwing himself on the ground.*
The dire remembrance weighs me to the earth—
Here let me die——

Pal. Rise, my loved Zaphna! rise,
And let us fly to Mahomet for protection:
If we are found in these abodes of slaughter,
Tortures and death attend us: let us fly!

Zaph. [*Starting up.*] I did fly at that blasting sight, Palmira,
When drawing out the fatal steel, he cast
Such tender looks! I fled—the fatal steel,
The voice, the tender looks, the bleeding victim

Blessing his murderer, I could not fly:
No, they clung to me, rived my throbbing heart,
And set my brain on fire. What have we done!
Pal. Hark! what's that noise! I tremble for thy life.
Oh! in the name of love, by all the ties,
Those sacred ties, that bind thee mine for ever,
I do conjure thee, follow me!
[ALCANOR *comes from behind the altar, leaning against it, with the bloody sword in his hand.*
Zaph. Ha! look, Palmira, see what object's that,
Which bears upon my tortured sight! Is't he?
Or is't his bloody manes come to haunt us?
Pal. 'Tis he himself, poor wretch! struggling with death,
And feebly crawling towards us. Let me fly,
And yield what help I can: let me support thee,
Thou much-lamented, injured, good old man!
Zaph. Why don't I move? my feet are rooted here,
And all my frame is struck and withered up
As with a lightning's blast.
Alc. My gentle maid,
Wilt thou support me?
Weep not, my Palmira.
Pal. I could weep tears of blood, if that would serve thee.
Alc. [*Sitting down.*] Zaphna, come hither; thou hast ta'en my life,
For what offence, or what one thought towards thee,
That anger or malevolence gave birth,
Heaven knows I am unconscious. Do not look so:
I see thou dost relent.

Enter PHARON *hastily.*

Pha. [*Starting back.*] Ha! 'tis too late then.
Alc. Would I could see Hercides!—Pharon, lo!
Thy martyred friend, by his distempered hand,
Is now expiring!
Pha. Dire unnatural crime!
Oh, wretched parricide!—behold thy father!
[*Pointing to* ALCANOR.
Zaph. My father!
Pal. Father! ha!
Alc. Mysterious Heaven!
Pha. Hercides, dying by the hand of Mirvan,
Who slew him, lest he should betray the secret,
Saw me approach, and, in the pangs of death,
Cried, 'Fly and save Alcanor; wrest the sword
From Zaphna's hands, if 'tis not yet too late,
That's destined for his death: then let him know,
That Zaphna and Palmira are his children.'
Pal. That Zaphna and Palmira are his children!
Dost hear that, Zaphna?
Zaph. 'Tis enough, my fate!
Canst thou aught more?
Alc. Oh, nature! oh, my children!
By what vile instigations wert thou driven,
Unhappy Zaphna! to this bloody action?
Zaph. [*Falling at his father's feet.*] Oh, I cannot speak!
Restore me, sir, restore that damned weapon,
That I, for once, may make it, as I ought,
An instrument of justice.
Pal. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, my father!
Strike here! the crime was mine; 'twas I alone,
That worked his will to this unnatural deed!
Upon these terms alone he could be mine;
And incest was the price of parricide!
Zaph. Strike your assassins——
Alc. I embrace my children,
And joy to see them, though my life's the forfeit!
Rise, children, rise, and live: live to revenge
Your father's death.—But, in the name of nature,
By the remains of this paternal blood,
That's oozing from my wound, raise not your hands
'Gainst your own being. Zaphna, wouldst thou do me
A second deadlier mischief?
Self-slaughter cannot atone for parricide.
Zaph. Then I will live,
Live to some purpose: This is glorious suffering.
Alc. Thy undetermined arm has not quite fulfilled
Its bigot purpose; I hope to live to animate
Our friends 'gainst this impostor: Lead them, Zaphna,
To root out a rapacious baneful crew,
Whose zeal is frenzy, whose religion murder!
Zaph. Swift, swift, ye hours! and light me to revenge!
Come, thou infernal weapon,
[*Snatches the bloody sword.*
I'll wash off thy foul stain with the heart's blood
Of that malignant sanctified assassin!
[*As* ZAPHNA *is going off,* MIRVAN *and his followers enter, and stop him.*
Mir. Seize Zaphna,
And load the traitorous murderer with chains!
Help you the good Alcanor—Hapless man!
Our prophet, in a vision, learnt to-night
The mournful tale of thy untimely end,
And sent me straight to seize the vile assassin,
That he might wreak severest justice on him:
Mahomet comes to vindicate the laws,
Not suffer, with impunity, their breach.
Alc. Heavens! what accumulated crimes are here!
Zaph. Where is the monster? bear me instant to him,
That I may blast him with my eye, may curse him
With my last hesitating voice!
Pal. Thou traitor!
Did not thy own death-doing tongue enjoin
This horrid deed?
Mir. Not mine, by Heaven!
Zaph. Not thine!
Mir. No; by our prophet, and his holy faith,
Of all the thoughts e'er harboured in this breast,
It ne'er had such a monster for its tenant!
Zaph. Most accomplished villain!

Mirvan, look at me—dar'st thou——
Mir. Off with him, [*To the Soldiers.*
And see him well secured, till Mahomet
Demands him of you.
Pal. Villain, hold! [*Laying hold of* ZAPHNA.
Mir. Away!
Zaph. Just, just reward of my credulity!
Pal. Let me go with him; I will share thy fate,
Unhappy Zaphna, for I share thy guilt——
But then—— [*Looking back at* ALCANOR.
Mir. No more—you must to Mahomet:
Obey without reluctance: Our great prophet,
In pity to your tender frame and years,
Will take you under his divine protection.
Pal. [*Aside.*] Oh death! deliver me from such protection!
Mir. If you would aught to save the destined Zaphna,
Follow me to the prophet; you may move him
To mitigate his doom.—Away!
[*To the soldiers who hold* ZAPHNA.
You this way. [*To* PALMIRA.

Zaph. Pardon
Pal. Oh, pardon
[*They are led off by degrees, looking alternately at their father and each other.*
Alc. Oh, insupportable!
Both from me torn, then, when I wanted most
Their consolation! [*A shout.*
Pha. Hark!
The citizens are roused, and all, in arms,
Rush on to your defence.
Alc. Pharon, support me
Some moments longer.—Help, conduct me towards them;
Bare this wound to them; let that speak the cause,
The treacherous cause—for words begin to fail me;
Then, if in death I can but serve my country,
Save my poor children from this tiger's gripe,
And give a second life to that loved pair,
By whose misguided zeal I lose my own——
What patriot, or parent, but would wish,
In so divine a cause, to fall a martyr! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter MAHOMET *and* MIRVAN.

Mah. Wrong will be ever nursed and fed with blood!——
So this boy bigot held his pious purpose?
Mir. Devoutly.
Mah. What reasonless machine
Can superstition make the reasoner man!
Alcanor lies there on his bed of earth?
Mir. This moment he expired, and Mecca's youth
In vain lament their chief. To the mad crowd
That gather'd round, good Ali and myself
(Full of thy dauntless heavenly-seeming spirit)
Disclaimed the deed, and pointed out the arm
Of righteous Heaven, that strikes for Mahomet.
Think ye, we cried (with eyes and hands uprear-ed,)
Think ye our holy prophet would consent
To such a crime, whose foulness casts a blot
On right of nations, nature, and our faith?
Oh, rather think he will revenge his death,
And root his murder from the burdened earth!
Then struck our breasts, and wept the good old man,
And only wished he'd died among the faithful,
And slept with Ibrahim.
Mah. Excellent Mirvan!
Mir. We, then, both at large
Descanted on thy clemency and bounty.
On that the silent and desponding crowd
roke out in murmurs, plaints, and last in shouts,
And each mechanic grew a mussulman.
Mah. Oh, worthy to deceive and awe the world,
Second to Mahomet! let me embrace thee——
But say, is not our army at their gates
To back our clemency?
Mir. Omar commands
Their nightly march through unsuspected paths,
And with the morn appears.
Mah. At sight of them,
The weak remaining billows of this storm
Will lash themselves to peace—But where is Zaphna?
Mir. Safe in a dungeon, where he dies apace.
Ere at the altar's foot he slew his sire,
In his own veins he bore his guilt's reward,
A deadly draught of poison.
Mah. I would be kind, and let him die deceived,
Nor know that parent-blood defiles his soul.
Mir. He cannot know it: if the grave be silent,
I'm sure Hercides is.
Mah. Unhappy Zaphna!
Something like pity checks me for thy death.
But why—I must not think that way—shall Mahomet
Give a new paradise to all mankind,
And let remorse of conscience be the hell
Of his own breast! My safety claimed his life,
And all the heaven of fair Palmira's charms
Shall be my great reward.
Mir. My noble lord,
Palmira is at hand, and waits your pleasure.
Mah. At hand! How, Mirvan, couldst thou let me talk

On themes of guilt, when that pure angel's near?
Mir. The weeping fair, led on by flattering hope
Of Zaphna's life, attends your sacred will:
A silent pale dejection shrouds her cheeks,
And, like the lily in a morning shower,
She droops her head and locks up all her sweets.
Mah. Say Mahomet awaits, and then
Assemble all our chiefs, and on this platform
Let them attend me straight. [*Exit* MIRVAN.

Enter PALMIRA *with attendants.*

Pal. [*Apart.*] Where have they led me?
Methinks each step I take, the mangled corse
Of my dear father (by poor Zaphna mangled)
Lies in my way, and all I see is blood——
[*Starting.*
'Tis the impostor's self!—Burst, heart, in silence.
Mah. Maid, lay aside this dread. Palmira's fate,
And that of Mecca, by my will is fixed.
This great event, that fills thy soul with horror,
Is mystery to all but Heaven and Mahomet.
Pal. Oh, ever righteous Heaven! canst thou suffer
This sacrilegious hypocrite, this spoiler,
To steal thy terrors, and blaspheme thy name,
Nor doom him instant dead? [*Aside.*
Mah. Child of my care,
At length from galling chains I've set thee free,
And made thee triumph in a just revenge;
Think then thou'rt dear to me, and Mahomet
Regards thee with a more than father's eye;
Then know (if thou'lt deserve the mighty boon)
An higher name, a nobler fate, awaits thee.
Pal. What would the tyrant?— [*Aside.*
Mah. Raise thy thoughts to glory,
And sweep this Zaphna from thy memory,
With all that's past—Let that mean flame expire
Before the blaze of empire's radiant sun.
Thy grateful heart must answer to my bounties,
Follow my laws, and share in all my conquests.
Pal. What laws, what bounties, and what conquests, tyrant?
Fraud is thy law, the tomb thy only bounty,
Thy conquests fatal as infected air,
Dispeopling half the globe—See here, good Heaven!
The venerable prophet I revered,
The king I served, the god that I adored!
Mah. [*Approaching her.*] Whence this unwonted language, this wild frenzy?
Pal. Where is the spirit of my martyred father?
Where Zaphna's, where Palmira's innocence?
Blasted by thee, by thee, infernal monster—
Thou found'st us angels, and hast made us fiends;
Give, give us back our lives, our fame, our virtue:
Thou canst not, tyrant—yet thou seek'st my love,
Seek'st with Alcanor's blood his daughter's love!
Mah. [*Apart.*] Horror and death! the fatal secret's known.

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, all's lost, thy glory tarnished,
And the insatiate tomb ripe to devour us!
Hercides' parting breath divulged the secret.
The prison's forced, the city all in arms:
See where they bear aloft their murdered chief,
Fell Zaphna in their front, death in his looks,
Rage all his strength. Spite of the deadly draught,
He holds in life but to make sure of vengeance.
Mah. What dost thou here, then? instant with our guards,
Attempt to stem their progress, till the arrival
Of Omar with the troops.
Mir. I haste, my lord. [*Exit* MIRVAN.
Pal. Now, now, my hour's at hand!
Hear'st thou those shouts, that rend the ambient air?
Seest thou those glancing fires, that add new horrors
To the night's gloom? fresh from thy murdering poignard,
My father's spirit leads the vengeful shades
Of all the wretches whom thy sword has butchered:
I see them raise their unsubstantial arms
To snatch me from thy rage, or worse, thy love.
Shadows shall conquer in Palmira's cause.
Mah. [*Aside.*] What terror's this, that hangs upon her accents?
I feel her virtue, though I know her weakness.
Pal. Thou ask'st my love; go seek it in the grave
Of good Alcanor. Talk'st of grateful minds?
Bid Zaphna plead for thee, and I may hear thee;
Till then, thou art my scorn—May'st thou, like me,
Behold thy dearest blood spilt at thy feet!
Mecca, Medina, all our Asian world,
Join, join to drive the impostor from the earth!
Blush at his chains, and shake them off in vengeance!
Mah. [*Aside.*] Be still, my soul, nor let a woman's rage
Ruffle thy wonted calm.—Spite of thy hate,
Thou art lovely still, and charming even in madness. [*A shout and noise of fighting.*
My fair, retire; nor let thy gentle soul
Shake with alarms; thou art my peculiar care:
I go to quell this traitorous insurrection,
And will attend thee straight.
Pal. No, tyrant, no;
I'll join my brother, help to head our friends,
And urge them on. [*A shout.*
Roll, roll your thunders, heavens, and aid the storm!
Now hurl your lightning on the guilty head,
And plead the cause of injured innocence!
[*Exit* PAL.

Enter ALI.

Mah. Whence, Ali, that surprise?
Ali. My royal chief,
The foe prevails. Thy troops, led on by Mirvan,

Are all cut off, and valiant Mirvan's self,
By Zaphna slain, lies weltering in his blood:
The guard, that to our arms should ope the gates,
Struck with the common phrenzy, vow thy ruin,
And death and vengeance is the general cry!
Mah. Can Ali fear? then, Mahomet, be thyself!
Ali. See, thy few friends, whom wild despair hath armed,
(But armed in vain) are come to die beside thee.
Mah. Ye heartless traitors! Mahomet alone
Shall be his own defender, and your guard
Against the crowds of Mecca—Follow me.
Ha!

Enter ZAPHNA, PALMIRA, *and* PHARON, *with citizens, and the body of* ALCANOR *on a bier.*

Zaph. See, see, my friends, where the Impostor stands,
With head erect, as if he knew not guilt,
As if no tongue spake from Alcanor's wounds,
Nor called for vengeance on him.
Mah. Impious man!
Is it not enough to have spilt thy parent-blood,
But, with atrocious and blaspheming lips,
Dar'st thou arraign the substitute of Heaven!
Zaph. The substitute of Heaven! so is the sword,
The pestilence, the famine; such art thou;
Such are the blessings Heaven has sent to man
By thee its delegate; nay, more, to me.—
Oh, he took pains, Palmira, upon us;
Deluded us into such monstrous crimes
As nature sickened at conception of!——
How couldst thou damn us thus?
Mah. Babbler, avaunt!
Zaph. Well thou upbraid'st me; for to parley with thee
Half brands me coward. Oh, revenge me, friends!
Revenge Alcanor's massacre; revenge
Palmira's wrongs, and crush the rancorous monster!
Mah. Hear me, ye slaves, born to obey my will!
Pal. Ah, hear him not! fraud dwells upon his tongue.
Zaph. Have at thee, fiend—Ha! Heaven!
[ZAPHNA *advancing, reels, and reclines on his sword.*
What cloud is this
That thwarts upon my sight? My head grows dizzy,
My joints unloose; sure 'tis the stroke of Fate.
Mah. [*Aside.*] The poison works! then triumph, Mahomet!
Zaph. Off, off, base lethargy!
Pal. Brother, dismayed!
Hast thou not power but in a guilty cause,
And only strength to be a parricide?
Zaph. Spare that reproach—Come on—It will not be;
[*Hangs down his sword, and reclines on* PHARON.
Some cruel power unnerves my willing arm,
Blasts my resolves, and weighs me down to earth.
Mah. Such be the fate of all, who brave our law.
Nature and death have heard my voice, and now
Let Heaven be judge 'twixt Zaphna and myself,
And instant blast the guilty of the two.
Pal. Brother! oh, Zaphna!
Zaph. Zaphna now no more.
[*Sinking down by* ALCANOR'S *body, and leaning on the bier,* PHARON *kneeling down with him, and supporting him.*
Down, down, good Pharon—Thou poor injured corse,
May I embrace thee? Won't thy pallid wounds
Purple anew at the unnatural touch,
And ooze fresh calls for vengeance?
Pal. Oh, my brother!
Zaph. In vain's the guiltless meaning of my heart;
High heaven detests the involuntary crime,
And dooms for parricide—Then tremble, tyrant!
If the Supreme can punish errors thus,
What new-invented tortures must await
Thy soul, grown leprous with such foul offences!
But soft—now Fate and Nature are at strife—
Sister, farewell! with transport should I quit
This toilsome, perilous, delusive stage,
But that I leave thee on it: leave thee, Palmira,
Exposed to what is worse than fear can image,
That tyrant's mercy; but I know thee brave;
Know that thou'lt act a part—Look on her, Heaven,
Guide her, and—oh! [*Dies.*
Pal. Think not, ye men of Mecca,
This death inflicted by the hand of heaven;
'Tis he—that viper——
Mah. Know, ye faithless wretches!
'Tis mine to deal the bolts of angry heaven;
Behold them there, and let the wretch, who doubts,
Tremble at Zaphna's fate; and know, that Mahomet
Can read his thoughts, and doom him with a look.
Go then, and thank your pontiff and your prince
For each day's sun he grants you to behold.
Hence to your temples, and appease my rage!
[*The people go off.*
Pal. Ah, stay! my brother's murdered by this tyrant:
By poison, not by piety, he kills.
Mah. 'Tis done——Thus ever be our law received! [*Apart.*
Now, fair Palmira——
Pal. Monster! is it thus
Thou mak'st thyself a god, by added crimes,
And murders justified by sacrilege?
Mah. Think, exquisite Palmira! for thy sake—
Pal. Thou'st been the murderer of all my race.
See where Alcanor, see where Zaphna, lies;
Do they not call for me too at thy hands?
Oh that they did! But I can read thy thoughts;

Palmira's saved for something worse than death;
This to prevent——Zaphna, I follow thee.
[*Stabs herself with* ZAPHNA'S *sword.*
Mah. What hast thou done!
Pal. A deed of glory, tyrant!
Thou hast left no object worth Palmira's eyes,
And, when I shut out light, I shut out thee——
[*Dies.*
Mah. Farewell, dear victim of my boundless passion!
The price of treachery, the reward of murder,
Sink with thee to the earth——Oh, justice, justice!
In vain are glory, worship, and dominion!
All conqueror as I am, I am a slave,
And, by the world adored, dwell with the damned!
My crimes have planted scorpions in my breast;
Here, here, I feel them. 'Tis in vain to brave
The host of terrors, that invade my soul:
I might deceive the world, myself I cannot.
Ali. Be calm a while, my lord think what you are.
Mah. Ha! what am I?
[*Turning to the bodies.*
Ye breathless family,
Let your loud crying wounds say what I am.
Oh! snatch me from that sight; quick, quick transport me
To nature's loneliest mansion, where the sun
Ne'er entered, where the sound of human tread
Was never heard—But wherefore? still I there,
There still, shall find myself—Ay, that's the hell!
I'll none on't. [*Drawing his sword.*
Ali. Heavens! help, hold him!
[ALI, *&c. disarm him.*
Mah. Paltry dastards!
You fled the foe, but can disarm your master!
Angel of death, whose power I've long proclaimed,
Now aid me, if thou canst; now, if thou canst,
Draw the kind curtain of eternal night,
And shroud me from the horrors that beset me!
[*Exeunt* MAHOMET, *&c.*
Pha. Oh! what a curse is life, when self-conviction
Flings our offences hourly in our face,
And turns existence torturer to itself!
Here let the mad enthusiast turn his eyes,
And see from bigotry what horrors rise;
Here in the blackest colours let him read,
That zeal, by craft misled, may act a deed,
By which both innocence and virtue bleed.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

LONG has the shameful licence of the age
With senseless ribaldry disgrac'd the stage;
So much indecencies have been in vogue,
They pleaded custom in the epilogue,
As if the force of reason was a yoke
So heavy—they must ease it with a joke;
Disarm the moral of its virtuous sway,
Or else the audience go displeas'd away.
How have I blush'd to see a tragic queen
With ill-timed mirth disgrace the well-wrote scene;
From all the sad solemnity of woe
Trip nimbly forth—to ridicule a beau:
Then, as the loosest airs she had been gleaning,
Coquette the fan, and leer a double meaning!
Shame on those arts that prostitute the bays!
Shame on the bard who this way hopes for praise!
The bold but honest author of to-night
Disdains to please you, if he please not right;
If, in his well-meant scene, you chance to find
Aught to ennoble or enlarge the mind;
If he has found the means, with honest art,
To fix the noblest wishes in the heart,
In softer accents to inform the fair,
How bright they look when virtue drops the tear,
Enjoy with friendly welcome the repast,
And keep the heart-felt relish to the last.

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

BY

THOMSON.

PROLOGUE.

BOLD is the man, who, in this nicer age,
Presumes to tread the chaste corrected stage.
Now, with gay tinsel arts, we can no more
Conceal the want of nature's sterling ore;
Our spells are vanish'd, broke our magic wand,
That us'd to waft you over sea and land;
Before your light the fairy people fade,
The demons fly,—the ghost itself is laid.
In vain of martial scenes the loud alarms,
The mighty prompter thund'ring out to arms,
The play-house posse clattering from afar,
The close-wedged battle and the din of war.
Now, even the senate seldom we convene;
The yawning fathers nod behind the scene.
Your taste rejects the glittering false sublime,
To sigh in metaphor, and die in rhyme.
High rant is tumbled from his gallery throne:
Description, dreams—nay similies are gone.
What shall we then? to please you how devise,
Whose judgment sits not in your ears nor eyes?
Thrice happy! could we catch great Shakspeare's art,
To trace the deep recesses of the heart;
His simple, plain sublime, to which is given
To strike the soul with darted flame from heaven;
Could we awake soft Otway's tender woe,
The pomp of verse and golden lines of Rowe!
We to your hearts apply: let them attend;
Before their silent, candid bar we bend.
If warm'd they listen, 'tis our noblest praise:
If cold, they wither all the muse's bays.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

TANCRED, *Count of Leece.*
MATTEO SIFFREDI, *Lord High Chancellor of Sicily.*
Earl OSMOND, *Lord High Constable of Sicily.*
RODOLPHO, *friend to Tancred, and captain of the guards.*

WOMEN.

SIGISMUNDA, *daughter of Siffredi.*
LAURA, *sister of Rodolpho, and friend to Sigismunda.*

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

SCENE,—*The city of Palermo, in Sicily.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Palace.*

Enter SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.

Sig. Ah, fatal day to Sicily! the king
Touches his last moments!
Laura. So 'tis feared.
Sig. The death of those distinguished by their station,
But by their virtue more, awakes the mind
To solemn dread, and strikes a saddening awe;
Not that we grieve for them, but for ourselves,
Left to the toil of life—And yet the best
Are, by the playful children of this world,
At once forgot, as they had never been.
Laura, 'tis said, the heart is sometimes charged
With a prophetic sadness: such, methinks,
Now hangs on mine. The king's approaching death
Suggests a thousand fears. What troubles thence
May throw the state once more into confusion,
What sudden changes in my father's house
May rise, and part me from my dearest Tancred,
Alarms my thoughts.
Laura. The fears of love-sick fancy,
Perversely busy to torment itself.
But be assured, your father's steady friendship,
Joined to a certain genius, that commands,
Not kneels to fortune, will support and cherish,
Here, in the public eye of Sicily,
This, I may call him, his adopted son,
The noble Tancred, formed to all his virtues.
Sig. Ah, formed to charm his daughter!—This fair morn
Has tempted far the chase. Is he not yet
Returned?
Laura. No. When your father to the king,
Who now expiring lies, was called in haste,
He sent each way his messengers to find him;
With such a look of ardour and impatience,
As if this near event was to count Tancred
Of more importance than I comprehend.
Sig. There lies, my Laura, o'er my Tancred's birth
A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accost,
Nay, with respect, which oft I have observed,
Stealing, at times, submissive o'er his features,
In Belmont's woods my father reared this youth—
Ah, woods! where first my artless bosom learned
The sighs of love.—He gives him out the son
Of an old friend, a baron of Apulia,
Who, in the late crusado, bravely fell.
But then 'tis strange; is all his family
As well as father dead? and all their friends,
Except my sire, the generous good Siffredi?
Had he a mother, sister, brother, left,
The last remain of kindred, with what pride,
With rapture, might they fly o'er earth and sea,
To claim this rising honour of their blood,
This bright unknown, this all-accomplished youth,
Who charms too much the heart of Sigismunda!
Laura, perhaps your brother knows him better,
The friend and partner of his freest hours.
What says Rodolpho? Does he truly credit
This story of his birth?
Laura. He has sometimes,
Like you, his doubts; yet, when maturely weighed,
Believes it true. As for lord Tancred's self,
He never entertained the slightest thought
That verged to doubt; but oft laments his state,
By cruel fortune so ill paired to yours.
Sig. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind,
Beggars all wealth—Then, to your brother, Laura,
He talks of me?
Laura. Of nothing else. Howe'er
The talk begin, it ends with Sigismunda.
Their morning, noontide, and their evening walks,
Are full of you, and all the woods of Belmont
Enamoured with your name.
Sig. Away, my friend;
You flatter——yet the dear delusion charms.
Laura. No, Sigismunda, 'tis the strictest truth,
Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondness
My brother talks for ever of the passion
That fires young Tancred's breast. So much it strikes him,
He praises love as if he were a lover.
He blames the false pursuits of vagrant youth,
Calls them gay folly, a mistaken struggle
Against best judging nature. Heaven, he says,
In lavish bounty formed the heart for love;
In love included all the finer seeds
Of honour, virtue, friendship, purest bliss——
Sig. Virtuous Rodolpho!
Laura. Then his pleasing theme
He varies to the praises of your lover——
Sig. And, what, my Laura, says he on the subject?
Laura. He says, that, though he was not nobly born,
Nature has formed him noble, generous, brave,
Truly magnanimous, and warmly scorning
Whatever bears the smallest taint of baseness;
That every easy virtue is his own;
Not learned by painful labour, but inspired,
Implanted in his soul, Chiefly one charm
He in his graceful character observes;
That though his passions burn with high impatience,
And sometimes, from a noble heat of nature,
Are ready to fly off; yet the least check
Of ruling reason brings them back to temper,
And gentle softness.
Sig. True! Oh, true, Rodolpho!
Blest be thy kindred worth for loving his!
He is all warmth, all amiable fire,
All quick heroic ardour! tempered soft
With gentleness of heart, and manly reason!

If virtue were to wear a human form,
To light it with her dignity and flame,
Then softening, mix her smiles and tender graces—
Oh, she would chuse the person of my Tancred!
Go on, my friend, go on, and ever praise him;
The subject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
While my breast trembles to that sweetest music!
The heart of woman tastes no truer joy,
Is never flattered with such dear enchantment—
'Tis more than selfish vanity—as when
She hears the praises of the man she loves!

Laura. Madam, your father comes.

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. [*To an attendant as he enters.*] Lord Tancred
Is found?

Atten. My lord, he quickly will be here.
I scarce could keep before him, though he bid me
Speed on, to say he would attend your orders.

Sif. 'Tis well—retire—You too, my daughter, leave me.

Sig. I go, my father—But how fares the king?

Sif. He is no more. Gone to that awful state,
Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.

Sig. How bright must then be his!—This stroke is sudden;
He was this morning well, when to the chase
Lord Tancred went.

Sif. 'Tis true. But at his years
Death gives short notice—Drooping nature then,
Without a gust of pain to shake it, falls.
His death, my daughter, was that happy period
Which few attain. The duties of his day
Were all discharged, and gratefully enjoyed
Its noblest blessings; calm as evening skies
Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
That open Heaven; when, for his last long sleep
Timely prepared, a lassitude of life,
A pleasing weariness of mortal joy,
Fell on his soul, and down he sunk to rest.
Oh, may my death be such!—He but one wish
Left unfulfilled, which was to see count Tancred.

Sig. To see count Tancred!—Pardon me, my lord—

Sif. For what, my daughter?—But, with such emotion,
Why did you start at mention of count Tancred?

Sig. Nothing—I only hoped the dying king
Might mean to make some generous just provision
For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Sif. And he has done it largely—Leave me now—
I want some private conference with lord Tancred. [*Exeunt* SIG. *and* LAURA.
My doubts are but too true—If these old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual passion
Has seized, I fear, my daughter and this prince,
My sovereign now—Should it be so? Ah, there,
There lurks a brooding tempest, that may shake
My long-concerted scheme, to settle firm
The public peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent basis of his will——
Away, unworthy views! you shall not tempt me!
Nor interest, nor ambition shall seduce
My fixed resolve—Perish the selfish thought,
Which our own good prefers to that of millions!
He comes, my king, unconscious of his fortune.

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. My lord Siffredi, in your looks I read,
Confirmed, the mournful news that fly abroad
From tongue to tongue—We then, at last, have lost
The good old king?

Sif. Yes, we have lost a father;
The greatest blessing heaven bestows on mortals,
And seldom found amidst these wilds of time,
A good, a worthy king!—Hear me, my Tancred,
And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
How he deserved that best, that glorious title;
'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.
He loved his people, deemed them all his children;
The good exalted, and depressed the bad.
He spurned the flattering crew, with scorn rejected
Their smooth advice that only means themselves,
Their schemes to aggrandize him into baseness:
Nor did he less disdain the secret breath,
The whispered tale, that blights a virtuous name.
He sought alone the good of those for whom
He was entrusted with the sovereign power:
Well knowing, that a people, in their rights
And industry protected; living safe
Beneath the sacred shelter of the laws;
Encouraged in their genius, arts, and labours,
And happy each, as he himself deserves,
Are ne'er ungrateful. With unsparing hand,
They will for him provide: their filial love
And confidence are his unfailing treasure,
And every honest man his faithful guard.

Tan. A general face of grief o'erspreads the city.
I marked the people, as I hither came,
In crowds assembled, struck with silent sorrow,
And pouring forth the noblest praise—of tears.
Those, whom remembrance of their former woes,
And long experience of the vain illusions
Of youthful hope, had into wise consent
And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,
And, often casting up their eyes to heaven,
Gave sign of sad conjecture. Others shewed,
Athwart their grief, or real, or affected,
A gleam of expectation, from what chance
And change might bring. A mingled murmur ran
Along the streets; and from the lonely court
Of him, who can no more assist their fortunes,
I saw the courtier-fry, with eager haste,
All hurrying to Constantia.

Sif. Noble youth!
I joy to hear from thee these just reflections,
Worthy of riper years—But if they seek
Constantia, trust me, they mistake their course

Tan. How! Is she not, my lord, the late king's sister,
Heir to the crown of Sicily? the last

Of our famed Norman line, and now our queen?
Sif. Tancred, 'tis true; she is the late king's sister,
The sole surviving offspring of that tyrant,
William the Bad—so for his vices styled;
Who spilt much noble blood, and sore oppressed
The exhausted land: whence grievous wars arose,
And many a dire convulsion shook the state:
When he, whose death Sicilia mourns to-day,
William, who has, and well deserved the name
Of Good, succeeding to his father's throne,
Relieved his country's woes—But to return;
She is the late king's sister, born some months
After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.
Tan. You much surprise me—May I then presume
To ask who is?
Sif. Come nearer, noble Tancred,
Son of my care. I must, on this occasion,
Consult thy generous heart; which, when conducted
By rectitude of mind and honest virtues,
Gives better counsel than the hoary head—
Then know, there lives a prince, here in Palermo,
The lineal offspring of our famous hero,
Roger the First.
Tan. Great Heaven! How far removed
From that our mighty founder?
Sif. His great grandson:
Sprung from his eldest son, who died untimely,
Before his father.
Tan. Ha! the prince you mean,
Is he not Manfred's son? The generous, brave,
Unhappy Manfred? whom the tyrant William,
You just now mentioned, not content to spoil
Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
And infamously murdered?
Sif. Yes, the same.
Tan. By Heavens, I joy to find our Norman reign,
The world's sole light amidst these barbarous ages,
Yet rears its head; and shall not, from the lance,
Pass to the feeble distaff.—But this prince,
Where has he lain concealed?
Sif. The late good king,
By noble pity moved, contrived to save him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage,
And had him reared in private, as became
His birth and hopes, with high and princely nurture.
Till now, too young to rule a troubled state,
By civil broils most miserably torn,
He, in his safe retreat, has lain concealed,
His birth and fortune to himself unknown;
But when the dying king to me intrusted,
As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
His successor he named him.
Tan. Happy youth!
He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
O'er haughty Osmond, and the tyrant's daughter.
Sif. Ay, that is what I dread—the heat of youth;
There lurks, I fear, perdition to the state;
I dread the horrors of rekindled war:
Though dead, the tyrant still is to be feared;
His daughter's party still is strong and numerous:
Her friend, earl Osmond, constable of Sicily,
Experienced, brave, high-born, of mighty interest.
Better the prince and princess should by marriage
Unite their friends, their interest, and their claims;
Then will the peace and welfare of the land
On a firm basis rise.
Tan. My lord Siffredi,
If by myself I of this prince may judge,
That scheme will scarce succeed—Your prudent age
In vain will counsel, if the heart forbid it—
But wherefore fear? The right is clearly his;
And, under your direction, with each man
Of worth, and stedfast loyalty, to back
At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
Against the astonished sons of violence,
Who fight with awful justice on their side.
All Sicily will rouse, all faithful hearts
Will range themselves around prince Manfred's son.
For me, I here devote me to the service
Of this young prince; I every drop of blood
Will lose with joy, with transport, in his cause—
Pardon my warmth—but that, my lord, will never
To this decision come—Then find the prince;
Lose not a moment to awaken in him
The royal soul. Perhaps he now, desponding,
Pines in a corner, and laments his fortune,
That in the narrower bounds of private life
He must confine his aims, those swelling virtues
Which from his noble father he inherits.
Sif. Perhaps, regardless, in the common bane
Of youth he melts, in vanity and love.
But if the seeds of virtue glow within him,
I will awake a higher sense, a love,
That grasps the loves and happiness of millions.
Tan. Why that surmise? Or should he love, Siffredi,
I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raise
And animate his virtues—Oh, permit me
To plead the cause of youth—Their virtue oft,
In pleasure's soft enchantment lulled awhile,
Forgets itself; it sleeps and gayly dreams,
Till great occasion rouse it; then, all flame,
It walks abroad, with heightened soul and vigour,
And, by the change, astonishes the world!
Even with a kind of sympathy, I feel
The joy that waits this prince; when all the powers,
The expanding heart can wish, of doing good;
Whatever swells ambition, or exalts
The human soul into divine emotions,
All crowd at once upon him.
Sif. Ah, my Tancred,
Nothing so easy as in speculation,
And at a distance seen, the course of honour;

A fair delightful champaign strewed with flowers.
But when the practice comes; when our fond passions,
Pleasure and pride, and self-indulgence, throw
Their magic dust around, the prospect roughens;
Then dreadful passes, craggy mountains rise,
Cliffs to be scaled and torrents to be stemmed;
Then toil ensues, and perseverance stern;
And endless combats with our grosser sense,
Oft lost, and oft renewed; and generous pain
For others felt; and, harder lesson still!
Our honest bliss, for others sacrificed;
And all the rugged task of virtue quells
The stoutest heart of common resolution.
Few get above this turbid scene of strife,
Few gain the summit, breathe that purest air,
That heavenly ether, which untroubled sees
The storm of vice and passion rage below.

Tan. Most true, my lord. But why thus augur ill?
You seem to doubt this prince. I know him not;
Yet, oh, methinks my heart could answer for him!
The juncture is so high, so strong the gale
That blows from Heaven, as through the deadest soul
Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue.

Sif. Hear him, immortal shades of his great fathers!—
Forgive me, sir, this trial of your heart.
Thou! thou, art he!

Tan. Siffredi!

Sif. Tancred, thou!
Thou art the man of all the many thousands
That toil upon the bosom of this isle,
By Heaven elected to command the rest,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy!

Tan. Manfred my father! I the last support
Of the famed Norman line, that awes the world!
I, who this morning wandered forth an orphan,
Outcast of all but thee, my second father!
Thus called to glory! to the first great lot
Of human kind!—Oh, wonder-working hand,
That, in majestic silence, sways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature!
Oh, grant me, Heaven, the virtues to sustain
This awful burden of so many heroes!
Let me not be exalted into shame,
Set up the worthless pageant of vain grandeur!
Meantime I thank the justice of the king,
Who has my right bequeathed me. Thee, Siffredi,
I thank thee—Oh, I ne'er enough can thank thee!
Yes, thou hast been—thou art—shalt be my father!
Thou shalt direct my inexperienced years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.

Sif. It is enough—for me—to see my sovereign
Assert his virtues, and maintain his honour.

Tan. I think, my lord, you said the king committed
To you his will. I hope it is not clogged
With any base conditions, any clause
To tyrannize my heart, and to Constantia
Enslave my hand, devoted to another.
The hint you just now gave of that alliance,
You must imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
In this alone I will not bear dispute,
Not even from thee, Siffredi!—Let the council
Be strait assembled, and the will there opened:
Thence issue speedy orders to convene,
This day ere noon, the senate; where those barons,
Who now are in Palermo, will attend,
To pay their ready homage to their king,
Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.

Sif. I go, my liege. But once again permit me
To tell you——Now, is the trying crisis,
That must determine of your future reign.
Oh, with heroic rigour watch your heart!
And to the sovereign duties of the king,
The unequalled pleasures of a god on earth,
Submit the common joys, the common passions,
Nay, even the virtues, of the private man.

Tan. Of that no more. They not oppose, but aid,
Invigorate, cherish, and reward each other.
The kind all-ruling wisdom is no tyrant.

[*Exit* SIF.

Now, generous Sigismunda' comes my turn
To shew my love was not of thine unworthy,
When fortune bade me blush to look on thee.
But what is fortune to the wish of love?
A miserable bankrupt! Oh, 'tis poor,
'Tis scanty all, whate'er we can bestow!
The wealth of kings is wretchedness and want!
Quick, let me find her! taste that highest joy,
The exalted heart can know, the mixed effusion
Of gratitude and love! Behold, she comes!

Enter SIGISMUNDA.

My fluttering soul was all on wing to find thee,
My love, my Sigismunda!

Sig. Oh, my Tancred!
Tell me, what means this mystery and gloom
That lowers around? Just now, involved in thought,
My father shot athwart me—You, my lord,
Seem strangely moved—I fear some dark event,
From the king's death, to trouble our repose,
That tender calm we in the woods of Belmont
So happily enjoyed——Explain this hurry;
What means it? Say.

Tan. It means that we are happy!
Beyond our most romantic wishes happy!

Sig. You but perplex me more.

Tan. It means, my fairest,
That thou art queen of Sicily; and I
The happiest of mankind! than monarch more,
Because with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant William's rage,
Famed Roger's lineal issue, was my father.

[*Pausing.*

You droop, my love; dejected on a sudden,
You seem to mourn my fortune—The soft tear
Springs in thy eye—Oh, let me kiss it off—
Why this, my Sigismunda?

Sig. Royal Tancred,

None at your glorious fortune can like me
Rejoice; yet me alone, of all Sicilians,
It makes unhappy.
Tan. I should hate it, then!
Should throw, with scorn, the splendid ruin from me!
No, Sigismunda, 'tis my hope with thee
To share it, whence it draws its richest value.
Sig. You are my sovereign—I at humble distance—
Tan. Thou art my queen! the sovereign of my soul!
You never reigned with such triumphant lustre.
Such winning charms, as now; yet, thou art still
The dear, the tender, generous Sigismunda!
Who, with a heart exalted far above
Those selfish views that charm the common breast,
Stooped from the height of life and courted beauty,
Then, then, to love me, when I seemed of fortune
The hopeless outcast, when I had no friend,
None to protect and own me, but thy father.
And wouldst thou claim all goodness to thyself?
Canst thou thy Tancred deem so dully formed,
Of such gross clay, just as I reached the point—
A point my wildest hopes could ne'er imagine—
In that great moment, full of every virtue,
That I should then so mean a traitor prove
To the best bliss and honour of mankind,
So much disgrace the human heart, as then,
For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
The faithless joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
The cordial sweets of friendship and of love,
The life of life! my all, my Sigismunda!
I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,
Cruel, unjust, an outrage to my heart,
Did they not spring from love.
Sig. Think not, my lord,
That to such vulgar doubts I can descend.
Your heart, I know, disdains the little thought
Of changing with the vain, external change
Of circumstance and fortune. Rather thence
It would, with rising ardour, greatly feel
A noble pride, to shew itself the same.
But, ah! the hearts of kings are not their own.
There is a haughty duty, that subjects them
To chains of state, to wed the public welfare,
And not indulge the tender, private virtues.
Some high-descended princess, who will bring
New power and interest to your throne, demands
Your royal hand—perhaps Constantia——
Tan. She!
Oh, name her not! were I this moment free
And disengaged as he, who never felt
The powerful eye of beauty, never sighed
For matchless worth like thine, I should abhor
All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father
Most basely murdered mine; and she, his daughter,
Supported by his barbarous party still,
His pride inherits, his imperious spirit,
And insolent pretensions to my throne.
And canst thou deem me, then, so poorly tame,
So cool a traitor to my father's blood,
As from the prudent cowardice of state
E'er to submit to such a base proposal?
Detested thought! Oh, doubly, doubly hateful!
From the two strongest passions; from aversion
To this Constantia—and from love to thee.
Custom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,
O'er servile man extends a blind dominion;
The pride of kings enslaves them; their ambition,
Or interest, lords it o'er the better passions.
But vain their talk, masked under specious words
Of station, duty, and of public good.
They, whom just Heaven has to a throne exalted,
To guard the rights and liberties of others,
What duty binds them to betray their own?
For me, my free-born heart shall bear no dictates,
But those of truth and honour; wear no chains,
But the dear chains of love and Sigismunda!
Or if indeed my choice must be directed
By views of public good, whom shall I choose
So fit to grace, to dignify a crown,
And beam sweet mercy on a happy people,
As thee, my love? whom place upon my throne
But thee, descended from the good Siffredi?
'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him
Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance.
Sig. Cease, cease to raise my hopes above my duty!
Charm me no more, my Tancred! Oh, that we
In those blest woods, where first you won my soul,
Had passed our gentle days, far from the toil
And pomp of courts! Such is the wish of love;
Of love that, with delightful weakness, knows
No bliss, and no ambition, but itself.
But in the world's full light, those charming dreams,
Those fond illusions vanish. Awful duties,
The tyranny of men, even your own heart,
Where lurks a sense your passion stifles now,
And proud imperious honour, call you from me.
'Tis all in vain—you cannot hush a voice
That murmurs here—I must not be persuaded!
Tan. [*kneeling.*] Hear me, thou soul of all my hopes and wishes!
And witness Heaven, prime source of love and joy!
Not a whole warring world combined against me,
Its pride, its splendour, its imposing forms,
Nor interest, nor ambition, nor the face
Of solemn state, nor even thy father's wisdom,
Shall ever shake my faith to Sigismunda!
[*Trumpets and acclamations heard.*
But, hark! the public voice to duties calls me,
Which, with unwearied zeal, I will discharge;
And thou, yes, thou, shalt be my bright reward;
Yet—ere I go—to hush thy lovely fears,
Thy delicate objections—[*Writes his name.*]——
Take this blank,
Signed with my name, and give it to thy father:
Tell him, 'tis my command, it be filled up
With a most strict and solemn marriage-contract.
How dear each tie, how charming to my soul,
That more unites me to my Sigismunda!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A grand Saloon.*

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. So far 'tis well——The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counselled; that prince Tancred
Shall make Constantia partner of his throne.
Oh, great, oh, wished event! whence the dire seeds
Of dark intestine broils, of civil war,
And all its dreadful miseries and crimes,
Shall be for ever rooted from the land.
May these dim eyes, long blasted by the rage
Of cruel faction, and my country's woes,
Tired with the toils and vanities of life,
Behold this period, then be closed in peace!
But how this mighty obstacle surmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt? Love, that disturbs
The schemes of wisdom still; that, winged with passion,
Blind and impetuous in its fond pursuits,
Leaves the grey-headed reason far behind.
Alas, how frail the state of human bliss!
When even our honest passions oft destroy it.
I was to blame, in solitude and shades,
Infectious scenes! to trust their youthful hearts.
Would I had marked the rising flame, that now
Burns out with dangerous force! My daughter owns
Her passion for the king; she, trembling, owned it,
With prayers, and tears, and tender supplications,
That almost shook my firmness—and this blank,
Which his rash fondness gave her, shews how much,
To what a wild extravagance he loves.—
I see no means—it foils my deepest thought—
How to controul this madness of the king,
That wears the face of virtue, and will thence
Disdain restraint, will, from his generous heart,
Borrow new rage, even speciously oppose
To reason, reason——But it must be done.
My own advice, of which I more and more
Approve, the strict conditions of the will,
Highly demand his marriage with Constantia;
Or else her party has a fair pretence,
And all at once is horror and confusion.
How issue from this maze?——The crowding barons,
Here summoned to the palace, meet already,
To pay their homage, and confirm the will.
On a few moments hangs the public fate,
On a few hasty moments——Ha! there shone
A gleam of hope——Yes, with this very paper
I yet will save him——Necessary means,
For good and noble ends, can ne'er be wrong.
In that resistless, that peculiar case,
Deceit is truth and virtue——But how hold
This lion in the toil?——Oh, I will form it
Of such a fatal thread, twist it so strong
With all the ties of honour and of duty,
That his most desperate fury shall not break
The honest snare. Here is the royal hand——
I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
And absolute agreement to the will;
Which read before the nobles of the realm
Assembled, in the sacred face of Sicily,
Constantia present, every heart and eye
Fixed on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
He must submit, his dream of love must vanish.
It shall be done——To me, I know, 'tis ruin;
But safety to the public, to the king.
I will not reason more, I will not listen
Even to the voice of honour. No——'tis fixed,
I here devote me for my prince and country;
Let them be safe, and let me nobly perish!
Behold, Earl Osmond comes, without whose aid
My schemes are all in vain.

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. My lord Siffredi,
I from the council hastened to Constantia,
And have accomplished what we there proposed.
The princess to the will submits her claims.
She with her presence means to grace the senate,
And of your royal charge, young Tancred's hand,
Accept. At first, indeed, it shocked her hopes
Of reigning sole, this new, surprising scene
Of Manfred's son, appointed by the king,
With her joint heir——But I so fully shewed
The justice of the case, the public good,
And sure established peace which thence would rise,
Joined to the strong necessity that urged her,
If on Sicilia's throne she meant to sit,
As to the wise disposal of the will
Her high ambition tamed. Methought, besides,
I could discern, that not from prudence merely
She to this choice submitted.

Sif. Noble Osmond,
You have in this done to the public great
And signal service. Yes, I must avow it;
This frank and ready instance of your zeal,
In such a trying crisis of the state,
When interest and ambition might have warped
Your views, I own this truly generous virtue
Upbraids the rashness of my former judgment.

Osm. Siffredi, no. To you belongs the praise;
The glorious work is yours. Had I not seized,
Improved the wished occasion to root out
Division from the land, and save my country,
I had been base and infamous for ever.
'Tis you, my lord, to whom the many thousands,
That by the barbarous sword of civil war
Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives; to you

The sons of this fair isle, from her first peers
Down to the swain who tills her golden plains,
Owe their safe homes, their soft domestic hours,
And through late time posterity shall bless you,
You who advised this will. I blush to think
I have so long opposed the best good man
In Sicily——With what impartial care
Ought we to watch o'er prejudice and passion,
Nor trust too much the jaundiced eye of party!
Henceforth its vain delusions I renounce,
Its hot determinations, that confine
All merit and all virtue to itself.
To yours I join my hand; with you will own
No interest, and no party but my country.
Nor is your friendship only my ambition:
There is a dearer name, the name of father,
By which I should rejoice to call Siffredi.
Your daughter's hand would to the public weal
Unite my private happiness.

Sif. My lord,
You have my glad consent. To be allied
To your distinguished family and merit,
I shall esteem an honour. From my soul
I here embrace earl Osmond as my friend
And son.

Osm. You make him happy! This assent,
So frank and warm, to what I long have wished,
Engages all my gratitude; at once,
In the first blossom, it matures our friendship.
I from this moment vow myself the friend
And zealous servant of Siffredi's house.

Enter an Officer belonging to the Court.

Offi. [*To* SIF.] The king, my lord, demands
your speedy presence.

Sif. I will attend him strait.—Farewell, my
lord;
The senate meets: there, a few moments hence,
I will rejoin you.

Osm. There, my noble lord,
We will complete this salutary work;
Will there begin a new auspicious era.
[*Exeunt* SIF. *and Offi.*
Siffredi gives his daughter to my wishes—
But does she give herself? Gay, young, and flattered,
Perhaps engaged, will she her youthful heart
Yield to my harsher, uncomplying years?
I am not formed, by flattery and praise,
By sighs and tears, and all the whining trade
Of love, to feed a fair one's vanity;
To charm at once and spoil her. These soft arts
Suit not my years nor temper; these be left
To boys and doting age. A prudent father,
By nature charged to guide and rule her choice,
Resigns his daughter to a husband's power,
Who, with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness, will ever love her;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.—

Enter Barons.

My lords, I greet you well. This wondrous day
Unites us all in amity and friendship.
We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,
Not gloomed by party, scowling on each other,
But all the children of one happy isle,
The social sons of liberty. No pride,
No passion now, no thwarting views divide us:
Prince Manfred's line, at last to William's joined,
Combine us in one family of brothers.
This to the late good king's well-ordered will,
And wise Siffredi's generous care, we owe.
I truly give you joy. First of you all,
I here renounce those errors and divisions,
That have so long disturbed our peace, and
seemed,
Fermenting still, to threaten new commotions—
By time instructed, let us not disdain
To quit mistakes. We all, my lords, have erred.
Men may, I find, be honest, though they differ.

1 *Baron.* Who follows not, my lord, the fair
example
You set us all, whate'er be his pretence,
Loves not, with single and unbiassed heart,
His country as he ought.

2 *Baron.* Oh, beauteous peace!
Sweet union of a state! what else but thou
Gives safety, strength, and glory to a people?
I bow, lord constable, beneath the snow
Of many years; yet in my breast revives
A youthful flame. Methinks, I see again
Those gentle days renewed, that blessed our isle,
Ere by this wasteful fury of division,
Worse than our Ætna's most destructive fires,
It desolated sunk. I see our plains
Unbounded waving with the gifts of harvest;
Our seas with commerce thronged; our busy ports
With cheerful toil. Our Enna blooms afresh;
Afresh the sweets of thymy Hybla flow.
Our nymphs and shepherds, sporting in each vale,
Inspire new song, and wake the pastoral reed—
The tongue of age is fond—Come, come, my
sons;
I long to see this prince, of whom the world
Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
The brave unhappy Manfred—Come, my lords;
We tarry here too long. [*Exeunt.*

Enter two Officers keeping off the Crowd.

One of the Crowd. Shew us our king,
The valiant Manfred's son, who loved the people—
We must, we will behold him—Give us way.

1 *Offi.* Pray, gentlemen, give back—it must
not be—
Give back, I pray——on such a glad occasion,
I would not ill entreat the lowest of you.

2 *Man of the Crowd.* Nay, give us but a glimpse
of our young king!
We, more than any baron of them all,
Will pay him due allegiance.

2 *Offi.* Friends—indeed
You cannot pass this way——We have strict orders,
To keep for him himself, and for the barons,
All these apartments clear——Go to the gate
That fronts the sea; you there will find admission.

Omnes. Long live king Tancred! Manfred's
son—huzza!
[*Crowd goes off. Shouts within.*

1 *Offi.* I do not marvel at their rage of joy;
He is a brave and amiable prince.
When in my lord Siffredi's house I lived,
Ere, by his favour, I obtained this office,
I there remember well the young count Tancred.
To see him and to love him were the same;
He was so noble in his ways, yet still
So affable and mild——Well, well, old Sicily,
Yet happy days await thee!

2 *Offi.* Grant it, Heaven!
We have seen sad and troublesome times enough.
He is, they say, to wed the late king's sister,
Constantia.

1 *Offi.* Friend, of that I greatly doubt.
Or I mistake, or lord Siffredi's daughter,
The gentle Sigismunda, has his heart.
If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
And fond assiduous care to please each other,
Most certainly they love——Oh, be they blest,
As they deserve! It were great pity aught
Should part a matchless pair; the glory he,
And she the blooming grace of Sicily!

2 *Offi.* My lord Rodolpho comes.

Enter RODOLPHO *from the Senate.*

Rod. My honest friends,
You may retire. [*Officers go out.*] A storm is in the wind.
This will perplexes all. No! Tancred never
Can stoop to these conditions, which at once
Attack his rights, his honour, and his love.
Those wise old men, those plodding, grave state pedants,
Forget the course of youth; their crooked prudence,
To baseness verging still, forgets to take
Into their fine-spun schemes the generous heart,
That, through the cobweb system bursting, lays
Their labours waste—So will this business prove,
Or I mistake the king. Back from the pomp
He seemed at first to shrink, and round his brow
I marked a gathering cloud, when, by his side,
As if designed to share the public homage,
He saw the tyrant's daughter. But confessed,
At least to me, the doubling tempest frowned,
And shook his swelling bosom, when he heard,
The unjust, the base conditions of the will.
Uncertain, tost in cruel agitation,
He oft, methought, addressed himself to speak,
And interrupt Siffredi; who appeared,
With conscious haste, to dread that interruption,
And hurried on——But hark! I hear a noise,
As if the assembly rose—Ha! Sigismunda,
Oppressed with grief, and wrapped in pensive sorrow,
Passes along.

[SIGISMUNDA *and attendants pass through the back scene.*

Enter LAURA.

Laura. Your high-praised friend, the king,
Is false, most vilely false. The meanest slave
Had shewn a nobler heart; nor grossly thus,
By the first bait ambition spread, been gulled.
He Manfred's son! away! it cannot be!
The son of that brave prince could ne'er betray
Those rights so long usurped from his great father,
Which he, this day, by such amazing fortune,
Had just regained; he ne'er could sacrifice
All faith, all honour, gratitude, and love,
Even just resentment of his father's fate,
And pride itself; whate'er exalts a man
Above the grovelling sons of peasant mud,
All in a moment—And for what? why, truly,
For kind permission, gracious leave, to sit
On his own throne with tyrant William's daughter!

Rod. I stand amazed—You surely wrong him, Laura.
There must be some mistake.

Laura. There can be none!
Siffredi read his full and free consent
Before the applauding senate. True, indeed,
A small remain of shame, a timorous weakness,
Even dastardly in falsehood, made him blush
To act this scene in Sigismunda's eye,
Who sunk beneath his perfidy and baseness.
Hence, till to-morrow he adjourned the senate;
To-morrow, fixed with infamy to crown him!
Then, leading off his gay, triumphant princess,
He left the poor unhappy Sigismunda
To bend her trembling steps to that sad home
His faithless vows will render hateful to her——
He comes—Farewell——I cannot bear his presence! [*Exit* LAURA.

Enter TANCRED *and* SIFFREDI, *meeting.*

Tan. Avoid me, hoary traitor! Go, Rodolpho,
Give orders that all passages this way
Be shut—Defend me from a hateful world,
The bane of peace and honour—then return—
[*Exit* ROD.
What! dost thou haunt me still? Oh, monstrous insult!
Unparalleled indignity! Just Heaven!
Was ever king, was ever man, so treated;
So trampled into baseness!

Sif. Here, my liege,
Here strike! I nor deserve, nor ask for mercy.

Tan. Distraction!—Oh, my soul!—Hold, reason, hold
Thy giddy seat.—Oh, this inhuman outrage
Unhinges thought!

Sif. Exterminate thy servant.

Tan. All, all but this I could have borne—but this!
This daring insolence beyond example!
This murderous stroke, that stabs my peace for ever!
That wounds me there—there! where the human heart
Most exquisitely feels——

Sif. Oh, bear it not,
My royal lord; appease on me your vengeance!

Tan. Did ever tyrant image aught so cruel?
The lowest slave that crawls upon the earth,
Robbed of each comfort Heaven bestows on mortals,
On the bare ground has still his virtue left,

The sacred treasure of an honest heart!
Which thou hast dared, with rash, audacious hand,
And impious fraud, in me to violate.
Sif. Behold, my lord, that rash, audacious hand,
Which not repents its crime—Oh, glorious, happy,
If, by my ruin, I can save your honour!
Tan. Such honour I renounce, with sovereign scorn;
Greatly detest it, and its mean adviser!
Hast thou not dared beneath my name to shelter—
My name, for other purposes designed,
Given, from the fondness of a faithful heart,
With the best love o'erflowing—Hast thou not,
Beneath thy sovereign's name, basely presumed
To shield a lie—a lie, in public uttered,
To all deluded Sicily? But know,
This poor contrivance is as weak as base.
In such a wretched toil none can be held
But fools and cowards.—Soon thy flimsy arts,
Touched by my just, my burning indignation,
Shall burst, like threads in flame.—Thy doating prudence
But more secures the purpose it would shake.
Had my resolves been wavering and doubtful,
This would confirm them, make them fixed as fate;
This adds the only motive that was wanting,
To urge them on through war and desolation.
What! marry her! Constantia! her! the daughter
Of the fell tyrant who destroyed my father!
The very thought is madness! Ere thou seest
The torch of Hymen light these hated nuptials,
Thou shalt behold Sicilia wrapt in flames,
Her cities razed, her vallies drenched with slaughter.
Love set aside, my pride assumes the quarrel;
My honour now is up; in spite of thee,
A world combined against me, I will give
This scattered will in fragments to the winds,
Assert my rights, the freedom of my heart,
Crush all who dare oppose me to the dust,
And heap perdition on thee!
Sif. Sir, 'tis just.
Exhaust on me thy rage; I claim it all.
But for these public threats thy passion utters,
'Tis what thou canst not do.
Tan. I cannot! ha!
Driven to the dreadful brink of such dishonour,
Enough to make the tamest coward brave,
And into fierceness rouse the mildest nature,
What shall arrest my vengeance? Who?
Sif. Thyself.
Tan. Away! Dare not to justify thy crime!
That, that alone can aggravate its horror;
Add insolence to insolence—perhaps
May make my rage forget—
Sif. Oh, let it burst
On this grey head, devoted to thy service!
But when the storm has vented all its fury,
Thou then must hear—nay, more, I know thou wilt—
Wilt hear the calm, yet stronger voice of reason.
Thou must reflect, that a whole people's safety,
The weal of trusted millions, should bear down,
Thyself the judge, the fondest partial pleasure.
Thou must reflect, that there are other duties,
A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
Superior pleasures far, that will oblige,
Compel thee, to abide by this my deed,
Unwarranted, perhaps, in common justice,
But which necessity, even virtue's tyrant,
With awful voice commanded.—Yes, thou must,
In calmer hours, divest thee of thy love,
These common passions of the vulgar breast,
This boiling heat of youth, and be a king,
The lover of thy people!
Tan. Truths, ill employed,
Abused to colour guilt!—A king! a king!
Yes, I will be a king, but not a slave;
In this will be a king; in this my people
Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,
When they behold me vindicate my own.
But have I, say, been treated like a king?—
Heavens! could I stoop to such outrageous usage,
I were a mean, a shameless wretch, unworthy
To wield a sceptre in a land of slaves,
A soil abhorred of virtue; should belie
My father's blood, belie those very maxims,
At other times you taught my youth—Siffredi!
[*In a softened tone of voice.*
Sif. Behold, my prince, thy poor old servant,
Whose darling care, these twenty years, has been
To nurse thee up to virtue; who, for thee,
Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,
All interest or ambition can pour forth;
What many a selfish father would pursue
Through treachery and crimes. Behold him here,
Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,
With tears to beg thee, to controul thy passion,
And save thyself, thy honour, and thy people!
Kneeling with me, behold the many thousands
To thy protection trusted; fathers, mothers,
The sacred front of venerable age,
The tender virgin, and the helpless infant;
The ministers of Heaven, those who maintain,
Around thy throne, the majesty of rule;
And those whose labour, scorched by wind and sun,
Feeds the rejoicing public:—see them all
Here, at thy feet, conjuring thee to save them
From misery and war, from crimes and rapine!
Can there be aught, kind Heaven, in self-indulgence,
To weigh down these, this aggregate of love,
With which compared, the dearest private passion
Is but the wafted dust upon the balance?
Turn not away—Oh! is there not some part
In thy great heart, so sensible to kindness,
And generous warmth, some nobler part, to feel
The prayers and tears of these, the mingled voice
Of Heaven and earth?
Tan. There is, and thou hast touched it.
Rise, rise, Siffredi—Oh, thou hast undone me!
Unkind old man!—Oh, ill-entreated Tancred!
Which way soe'er I turn, dishonour rears

Her hideous front—and misery and ruin!
Was it for this you took such care to form me!
For this imbued me with the quickest sense
Of shame; these finer feelings, that ne'er vex
The common mass of mortals, dully happy
In blessed insensibility? Oh, rather
You should have seared my heart, taught me, that power,
And splendid interest, lord it still o'er virtue;
That, gilded by prosperity and pride,
There is no shame, no meanness; tempered thus,
I had been fit to rule a venal world.
Alas! what meant thy wantonness of prudence?
Why have you raised this miserable conflict,
Betwixt the duties of the king and man?
Set virtue against virtue?—Ah, Siffredi!
'Tis thy superfluous, thy unfeeling wisdom,
That has involved me in a maze of error
Almost beyond retreat.—But hold, my soul,
Thy steady purpose—Tost by various passions,
To this eternal anchor keep;—there is,
Can be, no public without private virtue.
Then, mark me well, observe what I command;
It is the sole expedient now remaining.
To-morrow, when the senate meets again,
Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit:
Nor that alone; try to repair its mischief;
There all thy power, thy eloquence, and interest,
Exert, to reinstate me in my rights,
And from thy own dark snares to disembroil me.
Start not, my lord—this must, and shall be done!
Or here our friendship ends—Howe'er disguised,
Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor.

Sif. I should, indeed, deserve the name of traitor,
And even a traitor's fate, had I so slightly,
From principles so weak, done what I did,
As e'er to disavow it.

Tan. Ha!

Sif. My liege,
Expect not this. Though practised long in courts,
I have not so far learned their subtle trade,
To veer obedient with each gust of passion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders;
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever shake me from that solid rock,
Nor smiles, nor frowns.

Tan. You will not, then?

Sif. I cannot.

Tan. Away! begone!—Oh, my Rodolpho, come,
And save me from this traitor!—Hence, I say!
Avoid my presence strait! and know, old man,
Thou my worst foe, beneath the mask of friendship,
Who, not content to trample in the dust
My dearest rights, dost, with cool insolence,
Persist, and call it duty; hadst thou not
A daughter, that protects thee, thou shouldst feel
The vengeance thou deserv'st.—No reply!
Away! [*Exit* SIFFREDI.

Enter RODOLPHO.

Rod. What can incense my prince so highly
Against his friend Siffredi?

Tan. Friend! Rodolpho?
When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How played me like a boy, a base-born wretch,
Who had not heart nor spirit, thou wilt stand
Amazed, and wonder at my stupid patience.

Rod. I heard, with mixed astonishment and grief,
The king's unjust, dishonourable will,
Void in itself—I saw you stung with rage,
And writhing in the snare; just as I went,
At your command to wait you here—but that
Was the king's deed, not his.

Tan. Oh, he advised it!
These many years he has in secret hatched
This black contrivance, glories in the scheme,
And proudly plumes him with his traitorous virtue.
But that was nought, Rodolpho, nothing, nothing!
Oh, that was gentle, blameless to what followed!
I had, my friend, to Sigismunda given,
To hush her fears, in the full gush of fondness,
A blank signed with my hand; and he,—oh, Heavens!
Was ever such a wild attempt!—he wrote,
Beneath my name, an absolute compliance
To this detested will—nay, dared to read it
Before myself, on my insulted throne
His idle pageant placed—Oh! words are weak
To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation,
That whirled, from thought to thought, my soul in tempest,
Now on the point to burst, and now by shame
Repressed—But, in the face of Sicily,
All mad with acclamation, what, Rodolpho,
What could I do? the sole relief that rose
To my distracted mind, was to adjourn
The assembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
What can be done?—Oh, it avails not what!
I care not what is done—My only care
Is how to clear my faith with Sigismunda.
She thinks me false! She cast a look that killed me!
Oh! I am base in Sigismunda's eye!
The lowest of mankind, the most perfidious!

Rod. This was a strain of insolence indeed,
A daring outrage of so strange a nature
As stuns me quite—

Tan. Cursed be my timid prudence,
That dashed not back, that moment, in his face,
The bold, presumptuous lie!—and cursed this hand,
That, from a start of poor dissimulation,
Led off my Sigismunda's hated rival.
Ah, then! what, poisoned by the false appearance,
What, Sigismunda, were thy thoughts of me?
How, in the silent bitterness of soul,
How didst thou scorn me! hate mankind, thyself,
For trusting to the vows of faithless Tancred?
For such I seemed—I was—the thought distracts me!
I should have cast a flattering world aside,
Rushed from my throne, before them all avowed her,
The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,

And spurned the shameful fetters thrown upon it.
Instead of that—confusion!—what I did
Has clenched the chain, confirmed Siffredi's crime,
And fixed me down to infamy!
Rod. My lord,
Blame not the conduct which your situation
Tore from your tortured heart—What could you do?
Had you, so circumstanced, in open senate,
Before the astonished public, with no friends
Prepared, no party formed, affronted thus
The haughty princess and her powerful faction,
Supported by this will, the sudden stroke,
Abrupt and premature, might have recoiled
Upon yourself, even your own friends revolted,
And turned at once the public scale against you.
Besides, consider, had you then detected
In its fresh guilt this action of Siffredi,
You must, with signal vengeance, have chastised
The treasonable deed—Nothing so mean
As weak, insulted power that dares not punish.
And how would that have suited with your love?
His daughter present too? Trust me, your conduct,
Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
Was fortunate and wise—Not that I mean
E'er to advise submission——
Tan. Heavens! submission——
Could I descend to bear it, even in thought,
Despise me, you, the world, and Sigismunda!
Submission!—No!—To-morrow's glorious light
Shall flash discovery on the scene of baseness.
Whatever be the risk, by heavens! to-morrow,
I will o'erturn the dirty lie-built schemes
Of these old men, and shew my faithful senate,
That Manfred's son knows to assert and wear,
With undiminished dignity, that crown
This unexpected day has placed upon him.
But this, my friend, these stormy gusts of pride
Are foreign to my love—Till Sigismunda
Be disabused, my breast is tumult all,
And can obey no settled course of reason.
I see her still, I feel her powerful image,
That look, where with reproach complaint was mixed,
Big with soft woe, and gentle indignation,
Which seemed at once to pity and to scorn me——
Oh, let me find her! I too long have left
My Sigismunda to converse with tears,
A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
But ah! how, clogged with this accursed state,
A tedious world, shall I now find access?
Her father too—Ten thousand horrors crowd
Into the wild, fantastic eye of love——
Who knows what he may do? Come, then, my friend,
And by thy sister's hand, oh, let me steal
A letter to her bosom—I no longer
Can bear her absence, by the just contempt
She now must brand me with, inflamed to madness.
Fly, my Rodolpho, fly! engage thy sister
To aid my letter; and this very evening
Secure an interview—I would not bear
This rack another day, not for my kingdom.
Till then, deep plunged in solitude and shades,
I will not see the hated face of man. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber.*

SIGISMUNDA *alone, sitting in a disconsolate posture.*

Ah, tyrant prince! ah more than faithless Tancred!
Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falsehood!
Hadst thou this morning, when my hopeless heart,
Submissive to my fortune and my duty,
Had so much spirit left, as to be willing
To give thee back thy vows, ah! hadst thou then
Confessed the sad necessity thy state
Imposed upon thee, and with gentle friendship,
Since we must part at last, our parting softened;
I should indeed—I should have been unhappy,
But not to this extreme—Amidst my grief,
I had, with pensive pleasure, cherished still
The sweet remembrance of thy former love;
Thy image still had dwelt upon my soul,
And made our guiltless woes not undelightful.
But coolly thus—How couldst thou be so cruel?
Thus to revive my hopes, to soothe my love,
And call forth all its tenderness, then sink me
In black despair—What unrelenting pride
Possessed thy breast, that thou couldst bear, unmoved,
To see me bent beneath a weight of shame?
Pangs thou canst never feel! How couldst thou drag me,
In barbarous triumph, at a rival's car?
How make me witness to a sight of horror?
That hand, which, but a few short hours ago,
So wantonly abused my simple faith,
Before the attesting world given to another,
Irrevocably given!—There was a time,
When the least cloud that hung upon my brow,
Perhaps imagined only, touched thy pity.
Then, brightened often by the ready tear,
Thy looks were softness all; then the quick heart,
In every nerve alive, forgot itself,
And for each other then we felt alone.
But now, alas! those tender days are fled;

Now thou canst see me wretched, pierced with anguish,
With studied anguish of thy own creating,
Nor wet thy hardened eye—Hold, let me think—
I wrong thee sure; thou canst not be so base,
As meanly in my misery to triumph—
What is it, then!—'Tis fickleness of nature,
'Tis sickly love extinguished by ambition—
Is there, kind Heaven, no constancy in man?
No stedfast truth, no generous fixed affection,
That can bear up against a selfish world?
No, there is none—even Tancred is inconstant!
[*Rising.*
Hence! let me fly this scene!—Whate'er I see,
These roofs, these walls, each object that surrounds me,
Are tainted with his vows—But whither fly?
The groves are worse; the soft retreat of Belmont,
Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy summits,
Will wound my busy memory to torture,
And all its shades will whisper—faithless Tancred!
My father comes—How, sunk in this disorder,
Shall I sustain his presence?

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. Sigismunda,
My dearest child! I grieve to find thee thus
A prey to tears. I know the powerful cause
From which they flow, and therefore can excuse them,
But not their wilful obstinate continuance.
Come, rouse thee, then, call up thy drooping spirit,
Awake to reason from this dream of love,
And shew the world thou art Siffredi's daughter.
Sig. Alas! I am unworthy of that name.
Sif. Thou art indeed to blame; thou hast too rashly
Engaged thy heart, without a father's sanction.
But this I can forgive. The king has virtues,
That plead thy full excuse; nor was I void
Of blame, to trust thee to those dangerous virtues.
Then dread not my reproaches. Though he blames,
Thy tender father pities, more than blames thee.
Thou art my daughter still; and, if thy heart
Will now resume its pride, assert itself,
And greatly rise superior to this trial,
I to my warmest confidence again
Will take thee, and esteem thee more my daughter.
Sig. Oh, you are gentler far than I deserve!
It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
To bend my soul to your supreme commands,
Your wisest will; and though, by love betrayed—
Alas! and punished too—I have transgressed
The nicest bounds of duty, yet I feel
A sentiment of tenderness, a source
Of filial nature springing in my breast,
That, should it kill me, shall controul this passion,
And make me all submission and obedience
To you, my honoured lord, the best of fathers.
Sif. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age!
Thou only joy and hope of these grey hairs!
Come, let me take thee to a parent's heart;
There, with the kindly aid of my advice,
Even with the dew of these paternal tears,
Revive and nourish this becoming spirit!——
Then thou dost promise me, my Sigismunda—
Thy father stoops to make it his request—
Thou wilt resign thy fond presumptuous hopes,
And henceforth never more indulge one thought
That in the light of love regards the king?
Sig. Hopes I have none; those by this fatal day
Are blasted all—But from my soul to banish,
While weeping memory there retains her seat,
Thoughts which the purest bosom might have cherished,
Once my delight, now even in anguish charming,
Is more, my lord, than I can promise.
Sif. Absence, and time, the softner of our passions,
Will conquer this. Meantime, I hope from thee
A generous great effort; that thou wilt now
Exert thy utmost force, nor languish thus
Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
Let not thy father blush to hear it said,
His daughter was so weak, e'er to admit
A thought so void of reason, that a king
Should, to his rank, his honour, and his glory,
The high important duties of a throne,
Even to his throne itself, madly prefer
A wild romantic passion, the fond child
Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours;
That he should quit his heaven-appointed station,
Desert his awful charge, the care of all
The toiling millions which this isle contains;
Nay, more, should plunge them into war and ruin,
And all to soothe a sick imagination,
A miserable weakness. Must for thee,
To make thee blest, Sicilia be unhappy?
The king himself, lost to the nobler sense
Of manly praise, become the piteous hero
Of some soft tale, and rush on sure destruction?
Canst thou, my daughter, let the monstrous thought
Possess one moment thy perverted fancy?
Rouse thee, for shame! and if a spark of virtue
Lies slumbering in thy soul, bid it blaze forth;
Nor sink unequal to the glorious lesson,
This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.
Sig. Ah, that was not from virtue!—Had, father,
That been his aim, I yield to what you say;
'Tis powerful truth, unanswerable reason.
Then, then, with sad but duteous resignation,
I had submitted as became your daughter;
But in that moment, when my humbled hopes

Were to my duty reconciled, to raise them
To yet a fonder height than e'er they knew,
Then rudely dash them down—There is the sting!
The blasting view is ever present to me——
Why did you drag me to a sight so cruel!
Sif. It was a scene to fire thy emulation.
Sig. It was a scene of perfidy!—But know,
I will do more than imitate the king—
For he is false!—I, though sincerely pierced
With the best, truest passion, ever touched
A virgin's breast, here vow to Heaven and you,
Though from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
To cast this prince—What would you more, my father?
Sif. Yes, one thing more—thy father then is happy—
Though by the voice of innocence and virtue
Absolved, we live not to ourselves alone:
A rigorous world, with peremptory sway,
Subjects us all, and even the noblest most.
This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
Demands one step; a step, by which, convinced,
The king may see thy heart disdains to wear
A chain which his has greatly thrown aside.
'Tis fitting too, thy sex's pride commands thee,
To shew the approving world thou canst resign,
As well as he, nor with inferior spirit,
A passion fatal to the public weal.
But above all, thou must root out for ever
From the king's breast the least remain of hope,
And henceforth make his mentioned love dishonour.
These things, my daughter, that must needs be done,
Can but this way be done—by the safe refuge,
The sacred shelter, of a husband's arms;
And there is one——
Sig. Good heavens! what means my lord?
Sif. One of illustrious family, high rank,
Yet still of higher dignity and merit,
Who can and will protect thee; one to awe
The king himself—Nay, hear me, Sigismunda—
The noble Osmond courts thee for his bride,
And has my plighted word—This day—
Sig. [*Kneeling.*] My father!
Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees!
Oh, if you ever wish to see me happy;
If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
When, as I prattling twined around your neck,
You snatched me to your bosom, kissed my eyes,
And, melting, said you saw my mother there;
Oh, save me from that worst severity
Of fate! Oh, outrage not my breaking heart
To that degree!—I cannot!—'tis impossible!—
So soon withdraw it, give it to another—
Hear me, my dearest father; hear the voice
Of nature and humanity, that plead
As well as justice for me!——Not to choose
Without your wise direction may be duty;
But still my choice is free—that is a right,
Which even the lowest slave can never lose;
And would you thus degrade me?—make me base?
For such it were to give my worthless person
Without my heart, an injury to Osmond,
The highest can be done—Let me, my lord—
Or I shall die, shall, by the sudden change,
Be to distraction shocked—Let me wear out
My hapless days in solitude and silence,
Far from the malice of a prying world;
At least—you cannot sure refuse me this——
Give me a little time—I will do all,
All I can do, to please you!—Oh, your eye
Sheds a kind beam——
Sif. My daughter! you abuse
The softness of my nature—
Sig. Here, my father,
'Till you relent, here will I grow for ever!
Sif. Rise, Sigismunda.—Though you touch my heart,
Nothing can shake the inexorable dictates
Of honour, duty, and determined reason.
Then by the holy ties of filial love,
Resolve, I charge thee, to receive earl Osmond,
As suits the man who is thy father's choice,
And worthy of thy hand—I go to bring him.—
Sig. Spare me, my dearest father!
Sif. [*Aside.*] I must rush
From her soft grasp, or nature will betray me!
Oh, grant us, Heaven! that fortitude of mind,
Which listens to our duty, not our passions!
Quit me, my child!
Sig. You cannot, oh, my father!
You cannot leave me thus!
Sif. Come hither, Laura,
Come to thy friend. Now shew thyself a friend.
Combat her weakness; dissipate her tears:
Cherish, and reconcile her to her duty.
[*Exit* SIFFREDI.

Enter LAURA.

Sig. Oh, woe on woe! distressed by love and duty!
Oh, every way unhappy Sigismunda!
Laura. Forgive me, madam, if I blame your grief.
How can you waste your tears on one so false?
Unworthy of your tenderness; to whom
Nought but contempt is due, and indignation?
Sig. You know not half the horrors of my fate!
I might perhaps have learned to scorn his falsehood;
Nay, when the first sad burst of tears was past,
I might have roused my pride and scorned myself—
But 'tis too much, this greatest last misfortune—
Oh, whither shall I fly? Where hide me, Laura,
From the dire scene my father now prepares?
Laura. What thus alarms you, madam?
Sig. Can it be?
Can it!——ah, no!——at once give to another
My violated heart? in one wild moment?
He brings earl Osmond to receive my vows.
Oh, dreadful change! for Tancred, haughty Osmond!
Laura. Now, on my soul, 'tis what an outraged heart
Like yours should wish! I should, by Heavens, esteem it

Most exquisite revenge!
Sig. Revenge! on whom?
On my own heart, already but too wretched!
Laura. On him! this Tancred! who has basely sold,
For the dull form of despicable grandeur,
His faith, his love! At once a slave and tyrant!
Sig. Oh, rail at me! at my believing folly!
My vain ill-founded hopes! but spare him, Laura!
Laura. Who raised these hopes? Who triumphs o'er that weakness?
Pardon the word—you greatly merit him,
Better than him, with all his giddy pomp;
You raised him by your smiles, when he was nothing.
Where is your woman's pride, that guardian spirit,
Given us to dash the perfidy of man?
Ye powers! I cannot bear the thought with patience——
Yet recent from the most unsparing vows
The tongue of love e'er lavished; from your hopes
So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded;
Before the public thus, before your father,
By an irrevocable solemn deed,
With such inhuman scorn, to throw you from him,
To give his faithless hand, yet warm from thine,
With complicated meanness, to Constantia!
And, to complete his crime, when thy weak limbs
Could scarce support thee, then, of thee regardless,
To lead her off!
Sig. That was indeed a sight
To poison love; to turn it into rage,
And keen contempt. What means this stupid weakness
That hangs upon me! Hence, unworthy tears,
Disgrace my cheek no more! No more, my heart,
For one so coolly false, or meanly fickle——
Oh, it imports not which——dare to suggest
The least excuse!——Yes, traitor, I will wring
Thy pride, will turn thy triumph to confusion!
I will not pine away my days for thee,
Sighing to brooks and groves; while, with vain pity,
You in a rival's arms lament my fate——
No, let me perish, ere I tamely be
That soft, that patient, gentle Sigismunda,
Who can console her with the wretched boast,
She was for thee unhappy! If I am,
I will be nobly so!—Sicilia's daughters
Shall, wondering, see in me a great example
Of one who punished an ill-judging heart,
Who made it bow to what it most abhorred;
Crushed it to misery, for having thus
So lightly listened to a worthless lover!
Laura. At last it mounts, the kindling pride of virtue;
Trust me, thy marriage will embitter his——
Sig. Oh, may the furies light his nuptial torch!
Be it accursed as mine! for the fair peace,
The tender joys of hymeneal love,
May jealousy awaked, and fell remorse,
Pour all their fiercest venom through his breast!
Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow——
Let me not think——By injured love, I vow,
Thou shalt, base prince! perfidious and inhuman!
Thou shalt behold me in another's arms;
In his thou hatest! Osmond's!
Laura. That will grind
His heart with secret rage: Ay, that will sting
His soul to madness; set him up a terror,
A spectacle of woe to faithless lovers.
Your cooler thought, besides, will of the change
Approve, and think it happy. Noble Osmond
From the same stock with him derives his birth;
First of Sicilian barons, prudent, brave,
Of strictest honour, and by all revered——
Sig. Talk not of Osmond, but perfidious Tancred!
Rail at him, rail! invent new names of scorn!
Assist me, Laura; lend my rage fresh fuel;
Support my staggering purpose, which already
Begins to fail me—Ah, my vaunts how vain!
How have I lied to my own heart! Alas!
My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me!
Ten thousand crowding images distract
My tortured thought——And is it come to this!
Our hopes, our vows, our oft repeated wishes,
Breathed from the fervent soul, and full of heaven,
To make each other happy—come to this!
Laura. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
Thy resolution fixed, yet, Sigismunda,
Oh, think, how deeply, how beyond retreat,
Thy father is engaged!
Sig. Ah, wretched weakness!
That thus enthrals my soul, that chases thence
Each nobler thought, the sense of every duty!
And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years,
Thy tenderness for me? an eye still beamed
With love; a brow that never knew a frown;
Nor a harsh word thy tongue; shall I for these
Repay thy stooping venerable age
With shame, disquiet, anguish, and dishonour?
It must not be! Thou first of angels! come,
Sweet filial piety, and firm my breast!
Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit,
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy!——
Laura!—they come! Oh, heavens, I cannot stand
The horrid trial!—Open, open, earth,
And hide me from their view!
Laura. Madam!

Enter SIFFREDI *and* OSMOND.

Sif. My daughter,
Behold my noble friend, who courts thy hand,
And whom to call my son I shall be proud;
Nor shall I less be pleased in this alliance,
To see thee happy.

Osm. Think not, I presume,
Madam, on this your father's kind consent,
To make me blest. I love you from a heart,
That seeks your good superior to my own;
And will, by every art of tender friendship,
Consult your dearest welfare. May I hope,
Yours does not disavow your father's choice?
Sig. I am a daughter, sir—and have no power
O'er my own heart—I die—Support me, Laura.
[*Faints.*
Sif. Help—Bear her off—She breathes—my daughter!
Sig. Oh,
Forgive my weakness—soft—my Laura, lead me
To my apartment.
[*Exeunt* SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.
Sif. Pardon me, my lord,
If, by this sudden accident alarmed,
I leave you for a moment. [*Exit* SIFFREDI.
Osm. Let me think——
What can this mean?——Is it to me aversion?
Or is it, as I feared, she loves another?
Ha!—yes—perhaps the king, the young count Tancred;
They were bred up together——Surely that,
That cannot be—Has he not given his hand,
In the most solemn manner, to Constantia?
Does not his crown depend upon the deed?
No—If they loved, and this old statesman knew it,
He could not to a king prefer a subject.
His virtues I esteem—nay more, I trust them,
So far as virtue goes—but could he place
His daughter on the throne of Sicily——
Oh, 'tis a glorious bribe, too much for man!
What is it then? I care not what it be.
My honour now, my dignity demands,
That my proposed alliance, by her father,
And even herself accepted, be not scorned.
I love her too—I never knew till now
To what a pitch I loved her. Oh, she shot
Ten thousand charms into my inmost soul!
She looked so mild, so amiably gentle,
She bowed her head, she glowed with such confusion,
Such loveliness of modesty! She is,
In gracious mind, in manners, and in person,
The perfect model of all female beauty!
She must be mine—She is!—If yet her heart
Consents not to my happiness, her duty,
Joined to my tender cares, will gain so much
Upon her generous nature—That will follow.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Garden belonging to* SIFFREDI'S *house.*

Enter SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.

Sig. [*With a letter in her hand.*] 'Tis done!—
I am a slave!—The fatal vow
Has passed my lips!—Methought in those sad moments,
The tombs around, the saints, the darkened altar,
And all the trembling shrines, with horror shook.
But here is still new matter of distress.
Oh, Tancred, cease to persecute me more!
Oh, grudge me not some calmer state of woe,
Some quiet gloom to shade my hopeless days,
Where I may never hear of love and thee!
Has Laura, too, conspired against my peace?
Why did you take this letter?—Bear it back——
I will not court new pain. [*Giving her the letter.*
Laura. Madam, Rodolpho
Urged me so much, nay, even with tears conjured me,
But this once more to serve the unhappy king—
For such he said he was—that though enraged,
Equal with thee, at his inhuman falsehood,
I could not to my brother's fervent prayers
Refuse this office——Read it——His excuses
Will only more expose his falsehood.
Sig. No:
It suits not Osmond's wife to read one line
From that contagious hand—she knows too well!
Laura. He paints him out distressed beyond expression,
Even on the point of madness. Wild as winds,
And fighting seas, he raves. His passions mix,
With ceaseless rage, all in each giddy moment.
He dies to see you, and to clear his faith.
Sig. Save me from that!—That would be worse than all.
Laura. I but report my brother's words; who then
Began to talk of some dark imposition,
That had deceived us all: when, interrupted,
We heard your father and earl Osmond near,
As summoned to Constantia's court they went.
Sig. Ha! imposition?——Well, if I am doomed
To be, o'er all my sex, the wretch of love,
In vain I would resist—Give me the letter——
To know the worst is some relief——Alas,
It was not thus, with such dire palpitations,
That, Tancred, once I used to read thy letters.
[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to* LAURA.
Ah, fond remembrance blinds me! Read it, Laura.
Laura. [*Reads.*] 'Deliver me, Sigismunda, from that most exquisite misery which a faithful heart can suffer—To be thought base by her, from whose esteem even virtue borrows new charms. When I submitted to my cruel situation, it was not falsehood you beheld, but an excess of love. Rather than endanger that, I, for a while, gave

up my honour. Every moment till I see you stabs me with severer pangs than real guilt itself can feel. Let me then conjure you to meet me in the garden, towards the close of the day, when I will explain this mystery. We have been most inhumanly abused; and that by means of the very paper which I gave you, from the warmest sincerity of love, to assure to you the heart and hand of TANCRED.'

Sig. There, Laura, there, the dreadful secret sprung!
That paper! ah, that paper! it suggests
A thousand horrid thoughts—I to my father
Gave it! and he perhaps—I dare not cast
A look that way—If yet indeed you love me,
Oh, blast me not, kind Tancred, with the truth!
Oh, pitying, keep me ignorant for ever!
What strange peculiar misery is mine?
Reduced to wish the man I love were false!
Why was I hurried to a step so rash?
Repairless woe!—I might have waited, sure,
A few short hours—No duty that forbade—
I owed thy love that justice; till this day,
Thy love an image of all perfect goodness!
A beam from heaven that glowed with every virtue!
And have I thrown this prize of life away?
The piteous wreck of one distracted moment?
Ah, the cold prudence of remorseless age!
Ah, parents, traitors to your children's bliss!
Ah, cursed! ah, blind revenge!—On every hand
I was betrayed—You, Laura, too, betrayed me!

Laura. Who, who but he, whate'er he writes, betrayed you?
Or false or pusillanimous. For once,
I will with you suppose, that his agreement
To the king's will was forged—Though forged by whom?
Your father scorns the crime—Yet what avails it?
This, if it clears his truth, condemns his spirit.
A youthful king, by love and honour fired,
Patient to sit on his insulted throne,
And let an outrage, of so high a nature,
Unpunished pass, unchecked, uncontradicted—
Oh, 'tis a meanness equal even to falsehood.

Sig. Laura, no more—We have already judged
Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what seems
A trifle, a mere nothing, by itself,
In some nice situation turns the scale
Of fate, and rules the most important actions.
Yes, I begin to feel a sad presage!
I am undone, from that eternal source
Of human woes—the judgment of the passions.
But what have I to do with these excuses?
Oh, cease, my treacherous heart, to give them room!
It suits not thee to plead a lover's cause:
Even to lament my fate is now dishonour.
Nought now remains, but with relentless purpose,
To shun all interviews, all clearing up
Of this dark scene; to wrap myself in gloom,
In solitude and shades; there to devour
The silent sorrows ever swelling here;
And since I must be wretched—for I must—
To claim the mighty misery myself,
Engross it all, and spare a hapless father.
Hence let me fly!—The hour approaches——

Laura. Madam,
Behold he comes—the king—

Sig. Heavens! how escape?
No—I will stay—This one last meeting—Leave me. [*Exit* LAURA.

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. And are these long, long hours of torture past?
My life! my Sigismunda!
[*Throwing himself at her feet.*

Sig. Rise, my lord.
To see my sovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tan. Oh, let me kiss the ground on which you tread!
Let me exhale my soul in softest transport,
Since I again behold my Sigismunda! [*Rising.*
Unkind! how couldst thou ever deem me false?
How thus dishonour love?—Oh, I could much
Embitter my complaint!—how low were then
Thy thoughts of me! How didst thou then affront
The human heart itself? After the vows,
The fervent truth, the tender protestations,
Which mine has often poured, to let thy breast,
Whate'er the appearance was, admit suspicion?

Sig. How! when I heard myself your full consent
To the late king's so just and prudent will?
Heard it before you read in solemn senate?
When I beheld you give your royal hand
To her, whose birth and dignity of right
Demand that high alliance? Yes, my lord,
You have done well. The man, whom Heaven appoints
To govern others, should himself first learn
To bend his passions to the sway of reason.
In all, you have done well; but when you bid
My humbled hopes look up to you again,
And soothed with wanton cruelty my weakness—
That too was well—My vanity deserved
The sharp rebuke, whose fond extravagance
Could ever dream to balance your repose,
Your glory, and the welfare of a people.

Tan. Chide on, chide on. Thy soft reproaches, now,
Instead of wounding, only soothe my fondness.
No, no, thou charming consort of my soul!
I never loved thee with such faithful ardour,
As in that cruel, miserable moment
You thought me false; when even my honour stooped
To wear for thee a baffled face of baseness.
It was thy barbarous father, Sigismunda,
Who caught me in the toil. He turned that paper,
Meant for the assuring bond of nuptial love,
To ruin it for ever; he, he wrote
That forged consent, you heard, beneath my name,
Nay, dared, before my outraged throne, to read it!

Had he not been thy father——Ha! my love!
You tremble, you grow pale!
Sig. Oh, leave me, Tancred!
Tan. No!—leave thee!—Never! never till you set
My heart at peace! till these dear lips again
Pronounce thee mine! Without thee, I renounce
Myself, my friends, the world—Here on this hand—
Sig. My lord, forget that hand, which never now
Can be to thine united———
Tan. Sigismunda!
What dost thou mean?—Thy words, thy look, thy manner,
Seem to conceal some horrid secret—Heavens!——
No—that were wild——Distraction fires the thought!—
Sig. Inquire no more——I never can be thine.
Tan. What, who shall interpose? Who dares attempt
To brave the fury of an injured king,
Who, ere he sees thee ravished from his hopes,
Will wrap all blazing Sicily in flames!——
Sig. In vain your power, my lord—'Tis fatal error,
Joined to my father's unrelenting will,
Has placed an everlasting bar betwixt us——
I am Earl Osmond's——wife.
Tan. Earl Osmond's wife!——
[*After a long pause, during which they look at one another with the highest agitation, and most tender distress.*]
Heavens! did I hear thee right? What! married! married!
Lost to thy faithful Tancred! lost for ever!
Couldst thou then doom me to such matchless woe,
Without so much as hearing me?—Distraction!——
Alas! what hast thou done? Ah, Sigismunda!
Thy rash credulity has done a deed,
Which, of two happiest lovers that e'er felt
The blissful power, has made two finished wretches!
But—madness!—Sure, thou know'st it cannot be!
This hand is mine! a thousand thousand vows—

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. [*Snatching her hand from the king.*] Madam, this hand, by the most solemn rites,
A little hour ago, was given to me;
And did not sovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it—thus!
Tan. Ha! who art thou,
Presumptuous man!
Sig. [*Aside.*] Where is my father? Heavens! [*Goes out.*
Osm. One thou shouldst better know—Yes—view me, one
Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Against a faithless prince, an upstart king,
Whose first base deed is what a hardened tyrant
Would blush to act.
Tan. Insolent Osmond! know,
This upstart king will hurl confusion on thee,
And all who shall invade his sacred rights,
Prior to thine—thine, founded on compulsion,
On infamous deceit, while his proceed
From mutual love, and free long plighted faith.
She is, and shall be mine!—I will annul,
By the high power with which the laws invest me,
Those guilty forms in which you have entrapped,
Basely entrapped, to thy detested nuptials,
My queen betrothed, who has my heart, my hand,
And shall partake my throne—If, haughty lord,
If this thou didst not know, then know it now;
And know, besides, as I have told thee this,
Shouldst thou but think to urge thy treason further—
Than treason more! treason against my love!—
Thy life shall answer for it.
Osm. Ha! my life!———
It moves my scorn to hear thy empty threats.
When was it that a Norman baron's life
Became so vile, as on the frown of kings
To hang?—Of that, my lord, the law must judge:
Or, if the law be weak, my guardian sword——
Tan. Dare not to touch it, traitor, lest my rage
Break loose, and do a deed that misbecomes me.

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. My gracious lord, what is it I behold!
My sovereign in contention with his subjects?
Surely this house deserves from royal Tancred
A little more regard, than to be made
A scene of trouble, and unseemly jars.
It grieves my soul, it baffles every hope,
It makes me sick of life, to see thy glory
Thus blasted in the bud.—Heavens! can your highness
From your exalted character descend,
The dignity of virtue; and, instead
Of being the protector of our rights,
The holy guardian of domestic bliss,
Unkindly thus disturb the sweet repose,
The secret peace of families, for which
Alone the free-born race of man to laws
And government submitted?
Tan. My lord Siffredi,
Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my station
Are not to me unknown. But thou, old man,
Dost thou not blush to talk of rights invaded,
And of our best, our dearest bliss disturbed;
Thou, who, with more than barbarous perfidy,
Hast trampled all allegiance, justice, truth,
Humanity itself, beneath thy feet?
Thou know'st thou hast—I could, to thy confusion,
Return thy hard reproaches; but I spare thee
Before this lord, for whose ill-sorted friendship
Thou hast most basely sacrificed thy daughter!
Farewell, my lord.—For thee, lord constable,
Who dost presume to lift thy surly eye
To my soft love, my gentle Sigismunda,

I once again command thee, on thy life——
Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me—on thy life,
No further urge thy arrogant pretensions!
[*Exit* TAN.

Osm. Ha! arrogant pretensions! Heaven and earth!
What! arrogant pretensions to my wife?
My wedded wife! Where are we? in a land
Of civil rule, of liberty, and laws?——
Not, on my life, pursue them?—Giddy prince!
My life disdains thy nod. It is the gift
Of parent Heaven, who gave me, too, an arm,
A spirit to defend it against tyrants.
The Norman race, the sons of mighty Rollo,
Who, rushing in a tempest from the north,
Great nurse of generous freemen! bravely won,
With their own swords, their seats, and still possess them
By the same noble tenure, are not used
To hear such language.——If I now desist,
Then brand me for a coward! deem me villain!
A traitor to the public! By this conduct
Deceived, betrayed, insulted, tyrannized!
Mine is a common cause. My arm shall guard,
Mixed with my own, the rights of each Sicilian,
Of social life, and of mankind in general.
Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
I shall find means to shake thy tottering throne,
Which this illegal, this perfidious usage
Forfeits at once, and crush thee in the ruins!—
Constantia is my queen!

Sif. Lord constable,
Let us be stedfast in the right; but let us
Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
As well as manly firmness. True, I own,
The indignities you suffer are so high,
As might even justify what now you threaten.
But if, my lord, we can prevent the woes,
The cruel horrors of intestine war,
Yet hold, untouched, our liberties and laws;
Oh, let us, raised above the turbid sphere
Of little selfish passions, nobly do it!
Nor to our hot, intemperate pride, pour out
A dire libation of Sicilian blood.
'Tis godlike magnanimity to keep,
When most provoked, our reason calm and clear,
And execute her will, from a strong sense
Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
Of heat and passion, which, though honest, bears us
Often too far. Remember that my house
Protects my daughter still; and ere I saw her
Thus ravished from us, by the arm of power,
This arm should act the Roman father's part.
Fear not; be temperate; all will yet be well.
I know the king. At first his passions burst,
Quick as the lightning's flash; but in his breast
Honour and justice dwell—Trust me, to reason
He will return.

Osm. He will!—By Heavens, he shall!——
You know the king?—I wish, my lord Siffredi,
That you had deigned to tell me all you knew.—
And would you have me wait, with duteous patience,
Till he return to reason? Ye just powers!
When he has planted on our necks his foot,
And trod us into slaves; when his vain pride
Is cloyed with our submission; if, at last,
He finds his arm too weak to shake the frame
Of wide-established order out of joint,
And overturn all justice; then, perchance,
He, in a fit of sickly kind repentance,
May make a merit to return to reason.
No, no, my lord! there is a nobler way,
To teach the blind oppressive fury reason:
Oft has the lustre of avenging steel
Unsealed her stupid eyes—The sword is reason!

Enter RODOLPHO *with Guards.*

Rod. My lord high constable of Sicily,
In the king's name, and by his special order,
I here arrest you prisoner of state.

Osm. What king? I know no king of Sicily,
Unless he be the husband of Constantia.

Rod. Then know him now—behold his royal orders,
To bear you to the castle of Palermo.

Sif. Let the big torrent foam its madness off!
Submit, my lord.—No castle long can hold
Our wrongs—This, more than friendship or alliance,
Confirms me thine; this binds me to thy fortunes
By the strong tie of common injury,
Which nothing can dissolve.—I grieve, Rodolpho,
To see the reign in such unhappy sort
Begin.

Osm. The reign! the usurpation call it!
This meteor king may blaze awhile, but soon
Must spend his idle terrors—Sir, lead on——
Farewell, my lord—more than my life and fortune,
Remember well, is in your hands—my honour!

Sif. Our honour is the same. My son, farewell——
We shall not long be parted. On these eyes
Sleep shall not shed his balm, till I behold thee
Restored to freedom, or partake thy bonds!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber.*

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. The prospect lowers around. I found the king,
Though calmed a little, with subsiding tempest,
As suits his generous nature, yet in love
Abated nought, most ardent in his purpose;
Inexorably fixed, whate'er the risk,
To claim my daughter, and dissolve this marriage——
I have embarked, upon a perilous sea,
A mighty treasure. Here the rapid youth,
The impetuous passions of a lover king,
Check my bold purpose; and there, the jealous pride,
The impatient honour, of a haughty lord,
Of the first rank, in interest and dependence
Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
My honour, too, the same unchanged conviction,
That these my measures were, and still remain,
Of absolute necessity, to save
The land from civil fury, urge me on.
But how proceed?——I only faster rush
Upon the desperate evils I would shun.
Whate'er the motive be, deceit, I fear,
And harsh unnatural force, are not the means
Of public welfare, or of private bliss.——
Bear witness, Heaven! thou mind inspecting eye!
My breast is pure. I have preferred my duty,
The good and safety of my fellow-subjects,
To all those views that fire the selfish race
Of mortal men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to SIFFREDI.

Offi. My lord, a man of noble port, his face
Wrapped in disguise, is earnest for admission.
Sif. Go, bid him enter—— [*Officer goes out.*
Ha! wrapped in disguise!
And at this late unseasonable hour,
When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,
By the dire gloom of raging tempest doubled!

Enter OSMOND, *discovering himself.*

Sif. What! ha! earl Osmond, you?——Welcome, once more,
To this glad roof!——But why in this disguise?
Would I could hope the king exceeds his promise!
I have his faith, soon as to-morrow's sun
Shall gild Sicilia's cliffs, you shall be free.
Has some good angel turned his heart to justice?
Osm. It is not by the favour of count Tancred
That I am here. As much I scorn his favour,
As I defy his tyranny and threats.
Our friend Goffredo, who commands the castle,
On my parole, ere dawn to render back
My person, has permitted me this freedom.
Know then, the faithless outrage of to-day,
By him committed whom you call the king,
Has roused Constantia's court. Our friends, the friends
Of virtue, justice, and of public faith,
Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.
This, this, they say, exceeds whate'er deformed
The miserable days we saw beneath
William the Bad. This saps the solid base,
At once, of government and private life:
This shameless imposition on the faith,
The majesty of senates, this lewd insult,
This violation of the rights of men;
Added to these, his ignominious treatment
Of her, the illustrious offspring of our kings,
Sicilia's hope, and now our royal mistress.
You know, my lord, how grossly these infringe
The late king's will; which orders, if count Tancred
Make not Constantia partner of his throne,
That he be quite excluded the succession,
And she to Henry given, king of the Romans,
The potent emperor Barbarossa's son,
Who seeks, with earnest instance, her alliance.
I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
As guardian of this will, to you intrusted,
Desire, nay, more, demand your instant aid,
To see it put in vigorous execution.
Sif. You cannot doubt, my lord, of my concurrence.
Who, more than I, have laboured this great point?
'Tis my own plan; and if I drop it now,
I should be justly branded with the shame
Of rash advice, or despicable weakness.
But let us not precipitate the matter.
Constantia's friends are numerous and strong;
Yet Tancred's, trust me, are of equal force:
E'er since the secret of his birth was known,
The people all are in a tumult hurled,
Of boundless joy, to hear there lives a prince
Of mighty Guiscard's line. Numbers, besides,
Of powerful barons, who at heart had pined,
To see the reign of their renowned forefathers,
Won by immortal deeds of matchless valour,
Pass from the gallant Normans to the Suevi,
Will, with a kind of rage, espouse his cause.
'Tis so, my lord—be not by passion blinded——
'Tis surely so.——Oh, if our prating virtue
Dwells not in words alone—Oh, let us join,
My generous Osmond, to avert these woes,
And yet sustain our tottering Norman kingdom!
Osm. But how, Siffredi, how?—If, by soft means,
We can maintain our rights, and save our country,
May his unnatural blood first stain the sword

Who, with unpitying fury, first shall draw it!
Sif. I have a thought—The glorious work be thine!
But it requires an awful flight of virtue,
Above the passions of the vulgar breast,
And thence from thee I hope it, noble Osmond.
—Suppose my daughter, to her God devoted,
Were placed within some convent's sacred verge,
Beneath the dread protection of the altar.
Osm. Ere then, by Heavens! I would devoutly shave
My holy scalp, turn whining monk myself,
And pray incessant for the tyrant's safety.
What! how! because an insolent invader,
A sacrilegious tyrant, in contempt
Of all those noblest rights, which to maintain
Is man's peculiar pride, demands my wife;
That I shall thus betray the common cause
Of human kind!——
Tamely yield her up,
Even in the manner you propose!——Oh, then
I were supremely vile! degraded! shamed!
The scorn of manhood, and abhorred of honour!
Sif. There is, my lord, an honour, the calm child
Of reason, of humanity, and mercy,
Superior far to this punctilious dæmon,
That singly minds itself, and oft embroils,
With proud barbarian niceties, the world.
Osm. My lord, my lord, I cannot brook your prudence;
It holds a pulse unequal to my blood——
Unblemished honour is the flower of virtue!
The vivifying soul! and he, who slights it,
Will leave the other dull and lifeless dross.
Sif. No more—you are too warm.
Osm. You are too cool.
Sif. Too cool, my lord? I were indeed too cool,
Not to resent this language, and to tell thee—
I wish earl Osmond were as cool as I
To his own selfish bliss—ay, and as warm
To that of others—But of this no more.
My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
And will, against all force, maintain her thine.
But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
Whirled in a blaze of madness o'er the land;
Or, till the last extremity compel me,
Risk the dire means of war. The king, to-morrow,
Will set you free; and if, by gentle means,
He does not yield my daughter to your arms,
And wed Constantia, as the will requires,
Why then expect me on the side of justice—
Let that suffice.
Osm. It does—Forgive my heat.
My rankled mind, by injuries inflamed,
May be too prompt to take, and give offence.
Sif. 'Tis past—Your wrongs, I own, may well transport
The wisest mind—But henceforth, noble Osmond,
Do me more justice, honour more my truth,
Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion.
These jars apart, you may repose your soul
On my firm faith, and unremitting friendship.
Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
And the next sun we see shall prove it further.
Return, my son, and from your friend Goffredo
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.
Osm. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging north——
But your frail age, by care and toil exhausted,
Demands the balm of all-repairing rest.
Sif. Soon as to-morrow's dawn shall streak the skies,
I, with my friends, in solemn state assembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom;
Then by calm reason, or by higher means,
The king shall quit his claim, and in the face
Of Sicily, my daughter shall be yours.
Farewell.
Osm. My lord, good night. [*Exit* SIFFREDI.
[*After a long pause.*] I like him not——
Yes—I have mighty matter of suspicion.
'Tis plain. I see it lurking in his breast;
He has a foolish fondness for this king—
My honour is not safe, while here my wife
Remains—Who knows but he this very night
May bear her to some convent, as he mentioned—
The king too—though I smothered up my rage,
I marked it well—will set me free to-morrow.
Why not to-night? He has some dark design—
By Heavens, he has!—I am abused most grossly;
Made the vile tool of this old statesman's schemes;
Married to one—ay, and he knew it—one
Who loves young Tancred! Hence her swooning, tears,
And all her soft distress, when she disgraced me,
By basely giving her perfidious hand
Without her heart—Hell and perdition! this,
This is the perfidy!—this is the fell,
The keen, envenomed, exquisite disgrace,
Which, to a man of honour, even exceeds
The falsehood of the person—But I now
Will rouse me from the poor tame lethargy,
By my believing fondness cast upon me.
I will not wait his crawling timid motions,
Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow
Has promised to pursue. No! ere his eyes
Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,
I will convince him that earl Osmond never
Was formed to be his dupe—I know full well
The important weight and danger of the deed:
But to a man, whom greater dangers press,
Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,
Rashness itself, and utter desperation,
Are the best prudence.—I will bear her off
This night, and lodge her in a place of safety:
I have a trusty hand that waits not far.
Hence! let me lose no time—One rapid moment
Should ardent form, at once, and execute
A bold design—'Tis fixed—'Tis done!—yes, then,
When I have seized the prize of love and honour,
And with a friend secured her; to the castle
I will repair, and claim Goffredo's promise
To rise with all his garrison—My friends
With brave impatience wait. The mine is laid,
And only wants my kindling touch to spring.
[*Exit* OSM.

SCENE II.—SIGISMUNDA'S *Apartment.—Thunder.*

Enter SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.

Laura. Heavens! 'tis a fearful night!
Sig. Ah! the black rage
Of midnight tempest, or the assuring smiles
Of radiant morn, are equal all to me.
Nought now has charms or terrors to my breast,
The seat of stupid woe!—Leave me, my Laura;
Kind rest, perhaps, may hush my woes a little.
Oh, for that quiet sleep that knows no morning!
Laura. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.
Indulge my fondness—Let me watch a while
By your sad bed, 'till these dread hours shall pass.
Sig. Alas! what is the toil of elements,
[*Thunder.*
This idle perturbation of the sky,
To what I feel within?—Oh, that the fires
Of pitying heaven would point their fury here!
Good night, my dearest Laura.
Laura. Oh, I know not
What this oppression means—But 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can persuade myself to leave you—
Well then—Good night, my dearest Sigismunda.
[*Exit.*
Sig. And am I then alone!—The most undone,
Most wretched being now beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world—
I said I did not fear—Ah, me! I feel
A shivering horror run through all my powers!
Oh, I am nought but tumult, fears, and weakness!
And yet how idle fear, when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—Oh, thou gentle scene
[*Looking towards her bed.*
Of sweet repose, where, by the oblivious draught
Of each sad toilsome day, to peace restored,
Unhappy mortals lose their woes awhile,
Thou hast no peace for me!—What shall I do?
How pass this dreadful night, so big with terror?—
Here with the midnight shades, here will I sit,
[*Sitting down.*
A prey to dire despair, and ceaseless weep
The hours away—Bless me—I heard a noise—
[*Starting up.*
No—I mistook—nothing but silence reigns,
And awful midnight round—Again!—Oh, heavens!
My lord the king!

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. Be not alarmed, my love!
Sig. My royal lord, why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither?
Tan. By that secret way
My love contrived, when we, in happier days,
Used to devote these hours, so much in vain,
To vows of love, and everlasting friendship.
Sig. Why will you thus persist to add new stings
To her distress, who never can be thine?
Oh, fly me! fly! you know——
Tan. I know too much.
Oh, how I could reproach thee, Sigismunda!
Pour out my injured soul in just complaints!
But now the time permits not; these swift moments—
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forced me to seem perfidious in thy eyes.
Ah, fatal blindness! not to have observed
The mingled pangs of rage and love that shook me!
When by the cruel public situation
Compelled, I only feigned consent, to gain
A little time, and more secure thee mine.
E'er since—a dreadful interval of care!
My thoughts have been employed, not without hope,
How to defeat Siffredi's barbarous purpose.
But thy credulity has ruined all;
Thy rash, thy wild—I know not what to name it——
Oh, it has proved the giddy hopes of man
To be delusion all, and sickening folly!
Sig. Ah, generous Tancred! ah, thy truth destroys me!
Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am false!
My hasty rage, joined to my tame submission,
More than the most exalted filial duty
Could e'er demand, has dashed our cup of fate
With bitterness unequalled—But, alas!
What are thy woes to mine?—to mine! just Heaven!
Now is thy turn of vengeance—Hate, renounce me!
Oh, leave me to the fate I well deserve,
To sink in hopeless misery!—at least,
Try to forget the worthless Sigismunda!
Tan. Forget thee! No! Thou art my soul itself!
I have no thought, no hope, no wish but thee!
Even this repented injury, the fears,
That rouse me all to madness, at the thought
Of losing thee, the whole collected pains
Of my full heart, serve but to make thee dearer.
Ah, how forget thee!—Much must be forgot,
Ere Tancred can forget his Sigismunda!
Sig. But you, my lord, must make that great effort.
Tan. Can Sigismunda make it?
Sig. Ah! I know not
With what success—But all that feeble woman,
And love-entangled reason, can perform,
I, to the utmost, will exert to do it.
Tan. Fear not—'Tis done!—If thou canst form the thought,
Success is sure—I am forgot already.
Sig. Ah, Tancred!—But, my lord, respect me more.
Think who I am—What can you now propose?
Tan. To claim the plighted vows which Heaven has heard,
To vindicate the rights of holy love,
By faith and honour bound, to which compared

These empty forms, which have ensnared thy hand,
Are impious guile, abuse, and profanation——
Nay, as a king, whose high prerogative
By this unlicensed marriage is affronted,
To bid the laws themselves pronounce it void.
Sig. Honour, my lord, is much too proud to catch
At every slender twig of nice distinctions.
These, for the unfeeling vulgar, may do well:
But those, whose souls are by the nicer rule
Of virtuous delicacy nobly swayed,
Stand at another bar than that of laws.
Then cease to urge me—Since I am not born
To that exalted fate to be your queen——
Or, yet a dearer name——to be your wife!—
I am the wife of an illustrious lord,
Of your own princely blood; and what I am,
I will with proper dignity remain.
Retire, my royal lord. There is no means
To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.
We meet no more!
Tan. Oh, barbarous Sigismunda!
And canst thou talk thus steadily? thus treat me
With such unpitying, unrelenting rigour?
Poor is the love, that, rather than give up
A little pride, a little formal pride,
The breath of vanity, can bear to see
The man, whose heart was once so dear to thine,
By many a tender vow so mixed together,
A prey to anguish, fury, and distraction!
Thou canst not surely make me such a wretch;
Thou canst not, Sigismunda!—Yet relent!
Oh, save us yet!—Rodolpho, with my guards,
Waits in the garden—Let us seize the moments,
We ne'er may have again—With more than power
I will assert thee mine, with fairest honour.
The world shall even approve; each honest bosom
Swell with a kindred joy to see us happy.
Sig. The world approve! what is the world to me!
The conscious mind is its own awful world.
And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
I know not, Tancred, what I might have done.
Then, then, my conduct, sanctified by love,
Could not be deemed, by the severest judge,
The mean effect of interest or ambition.
But now, not all my partial heart can plead,
Shall ever shake the unalterable dictates
That tyrannize my breast.
Tan. 'Tis well—No more—
I yield me to my fate—Yes, yes, inhuman!
Since thy barbarian heart is steeled by pride,
Shut up to love and pity, here behold me
Cast on the ground, a vile and abject wretch!
Lost to all cares, all dignities, all duties!
Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful soul,
Here at thy feet—Death, death alone shall part us!
Sig. Have you then vowed to drive me to perdition!
What can I more?—Yes, Tancred! once again
I will forget the dignity my station
Commands me to sustain—for the last time
Will tell thee, that I fear, no ties, no duty,
Can ever root thee from my hapless bosom.
Oh, leave me! fly me! were it but in pity!—
To see what once we tenderly have loved,
Cut off from every hope—cut off for ever,
Is pain thy generosity should spare me.
Then rise, my lord; and if you truly love me,
If you respect my honour, nay, my peace,
Retire! for though the emotions of my heart
Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!
They tear it so, they pierce it with such anguish—
Oh, 'tis too much!—I cannot bear the conflict!

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. Turn, tyrant, turn! and answer to my bonour,
For this thy base insufferable outrage!
Tan. Insolent traitor! think not to escape
Thyself my vengeance!
[*They fight*, OSMOND *falls.*
Sig. Help, here! Help!—Oh, heavens!
[*Throwing herself down by him.*
Alas, my lord, what meant your headlong rage?
That faith, which I this day, upon the altar,
To you devoted, is unblemished, pure
As vestal truth: was resolutely yours,
Beyond the power of aught on earth to shake it.
Osm. Perfidious woman! die!—[*Shortening his sword, he plunges it into her breast.*]
And to the grave attend a husband, yet but half avenged!
Tan. Oh, horror! horror! execrable villain!
Osm. And, tyrant! thou!—thou shalt not o'er my tomb
Exult—'Tis well—'Tis great!—I die content!—
[*Dies.*

Enter RODOLPHO *and* LAURA.

Tan. [*Throwing himself down by* SIG.] Quick! here! bring aid!—All in Palermo bring,
Whose skill can save her!—Ah, that gentle bosom
Pours fast the streams of life.
Sig. All aid is vain;
I feel the powerful hand of death upon me—
But, oh! it sheds a sweetness through my fate,
That I am thine again; and, without blame,
May in my Tancred's arms resign my soul!
Tan. Oh, death is in that voice! so gently mild,
So sadly sweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels!—Mine again!—
And is it thus the cruel fates have joined us?
Are these the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours?—Is virtue thus rewarded?
Let not my impious rage accuse just Heaven!
Thou, Tancred, thou, hast murdered Sigismunda!
That furious man was but the tool of fate,
I, I the cause!—But I will do thee justice
On this deaf heart! that to thy tender wisdom
Refused an ear—Yes, death shall soon unite us.

Sig. Live, live, my Tancred!—Let my death suffice
To expiate all that may have been amiss.
May it appease the fates, avert their fury
From thy propitious reign! Meantime, of me
And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee,
To guard our friends, and make thy people happy—

Enter SIFFREDI, *fixed in astonishment and grief.*

My father!—Oh, how shall I lift my eyes
To thee, my sinking father!
Sif. Awful Heaven!
I am chastised—My dearest child!—
Sig. Where am I?
A fearful darkness closes all around—
My friends! We needs must part—I must obey
The impetuous call—Farewell, my Laura! cherish
My poor afflicted father's age—Rodolpho,
Now is the time to watch the unhappy king,
With all the care and tenderness of friendship.
Oh, my dear father, bowed beneath the weight
Of age and grief—the victim even of virtue,
Receive my last adieu!...Where art thou, Tancred?
Give me thy hand—But, ah,—it cannot save me
From the dire king of terrors, whose cold power
Creeps o'er my heart——Oh!
Tan. How these pangs distract me!
Oh, lift thy gracious eyes!——Thou leav'st me, then!
Thou leav'st me, Sigismunda!
Sig. Yet a moment——
I had, my Tancred, something more to say——
Yes—but thy love and tenderness for me,
Sure make it needless—Harbour no resentment
Against my father; venerate his zeal,
That acted from a principle of goodness,
From faithful love to thee—Live, and maintain
My innocence! embalmed with holiest care,
Preserve my spotless memory! Oh—I die—
Eternal mercy take my trembling soul!
Oh, 'tis the only sting of death to part
From those we love—from thee—farewell, my Tancred! [*Dies.*
Tan. Thus then!
[*Flying to his sword, is held by* RODOLPHO.
Rod. Hold, hold, my lord!—Have you forgot
Your Sigismunda's last request already?
Tan. Off! set me free! Think not to bind me down,
With barbarous friendship, to the rack of life!
What hand can shut the thousand thousand gates,
Which death still opens to the woes of mortals?—
I shall find means—No power in earth or heaven
Can force me to endure the hateful light,
Thus robbed of all that lent it joy and sweetness!
Off, traitors, off! or my distracted soul
Will burst indignant from this jail of nature,
To where she beckons yonder—No, mild seraph,
Point not to life——I cannot linger here,
Cut off from thee, the miserable pity,
The scorn of humankind!—A trampled king!
Who let his mean poor-hearted love one moment
To coward prudence stoop! who made it not
The first undoubting action of his reign,
To snatch thee to his throne, and there to shield thee,
Thy helpless bosom, from a ruffian's fury!
Oh, shame! Oh, agony! Oh, the fell stings
Of late, of vain repentance!——Ha, my brain
Is all on fire! a wild abyss of thought!
The infernal world discloses! See! Behold him!
Lo! with fierce smiles he shakes the bloody steel,
And mocks my feeble tears.—Hence, quickly, hence!
Spurn his vile carcase! give it to the dogs!
Expose it to the winds and screaming ravens!
Or hurl it down that fiery steep to hell,
There, with his soul, to toss in flames for ever!—
Ah, impotence of rage!
What am I? Where?
Sad, silent all? The forms of dumb despair,
Around some mournful tomb.—What do I see?
This soft abode of innocence and love
Turned to the house of death! a place of horror!—
Ah, that poor corse! pale! pale! deformed with murder!
Is that my Sigismunda?
[*Throws himself down by her.*
Sif. [*After a pathetic pause, looking on the scene before him.*
Have I lived
To these enfeebled years, by heaven reserved
To be a dreadful monument of justice?——
Rodolpho, raise the king, and bear him hence
From this distracting scene of blood and death.
Alas, I dare not give him my assistance;
My care would only more inflame his rage.
Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
That by rude force the passions would command,
That ruthless thought to root them from the breast;
They may be ruled, but will not be opprest.
Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature stray,
And the great ties of social life betray,
Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part;
'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.
Ye vainly wise, who o'er mankind preside,
Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride;
Keep virtue's simple path before your eyes,
Nor think from evil good can ever rise.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

CRAMM'D to the throat with wholesome moral stuff,
Alas, poor audience, you have had enough.
Was ever hapless heroine of a play
In such a piteous plight as ours to-day?
Was ever woman so by love betray'd?
Match'd with two husbands, and yet—die a maid.
But, bless me!—hold! what sounds are these I hear—
I see the Tragic Muse herself appear.
[*The back scene opens, and discovers a romantic sylvan landscape, from which the Tragic Muse advances slowly, and speaks the following lines:*
Hence with your flippant epilogue, that tries
To wipe the virtuous tear from British eyes;
That dares my moral, tragic scene profane,
With strains—at best, unsuiting, light, and vain.
Hence from the pure unsullied beams that play
In yon fair eyes where virtue shines—away!
Britons, to you, from the Castalian groves,
Where dwell the tender, oft unhappy loves;
Where shades of heroes roam, each mighty name,
And court my aid to rise again to fame;
To you I come, to freedom's noblest seat,
And in Britannia fix my last retreat.
In Greece and Rome, I watch'd the public weal,
The purple tyrant trembled at my steel:
Nor did I less o'er private sorrows reign,
And mend the melting heart with softer pain.
On France and you then rose my brightning star,
With social ray—The arts are ne'er at war.
Oh, as your fire and genius strongly blaze,
As your's are generous Freedom's bolder lays,
Let not the Gallic taste leave yours behind,
In decent manners and in life refin'd.
Banish the motley mode to tag low verse,
The laughing ballad to the mournful hearse.
When through five acts your hearts have learn'd to glow,
Touch'd with the secret force of honest woe;
Oh, keep the dear impression on your breast,
Nor idly lose it for a wretched jest.

IRENE.

BY

JOHNSON.

PROLOGUE.

Ye glittering train! whom lace and velvet bless,
Suspend the soft solicitudes of dress;
From grovelling business and superfluous care,
Ye sons of avarice! a moment spare:
Vot'ries of fame and worshippers of power!
Dismiss the pleasing phantoms for an hour.
Our daring bard, with spirit unconfin'd,
Spreads wide the mighty moral for mankind.
Learn here how Heaven supports the virtuous mind,
Daring, though calm; and vigorous, though resign'd.
Learn here what anguish racks the guilty breast,
In power dependent, in success deprest;
Learn here that peace from innocence must flow;
All else is empty sound, and idle show.
If truths like these with pleasing language join;
Ennobled, yet unchanged, if nature shine;
If no wild draught depart from reason's rules,
Nor gods his heroes, nor his lovers fools;
Intriguing wits! his artless plot forgive,
And spare him, beauties, though his lovers live.
Be this at least his praise; be this his pride;
To force applause no modern arts are tried.
Should partial catcalls all his hopes confound,
He bids no trumpet quell the fatal sound.
Should welcome sleep relieve the weary wit,
He rolls no thunders o'er the drowsy pit.
No snares, to captivate the judgment, spreads;
Nor bribes your eyes to prejudice your heads.
Unmoved the witlings sneer and rivals rail;
Studious to please, yet not ashamed to fail.
He scorns the meek address, the suppliant strain,
With merit needless, and without it vain.
In reason, nature, truth, he dares to trust;
Ye fops, be silent! and, ye wits, be just!

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Mahomet, *emperor of the Turks.*
Cali Bassa, *first vizier.*
Mustapha, *a Turkish aga.*
Abdalla, *an officer.*
Hassan, Caraza, } *Turkish captains.*

Demetrius, Leontius, } *Greek noblemen.*

WOMEN.

Aspasia, Irene, } *Greek Captives.*

Attendants on Irene.

Scene,—*Turkey.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

DEMETRIUS *and* LEONTIUS *in Turkish habits.*

Leon. And is it thus Demetrius meets his friend,
Hid in the mean disguise of Turkish robes,
With servile secrecy to lurk in shades,
And vent our sufferings in clandestine groans?
Dem. Till breathless fury rested from destruction,
These groans were fatal, these disguises vain:
But now our Turkish conquerors have quenched
Their rage, and palled their appetite of murder;
No more the glutted sabre thirsts for blood,
And weary cruelty remits her tortures.
Leon. Yet Greece enjoys no gleam of transient hope,
No soothing interval of peaceful sorrow;
The lust of gold succeeds the rage of conquest,
The lust of gold, unfeeling and remorseless!
The last corruption of degenerate man!
Urged by the imperious soldier's fierce command,
The groaning Greeks break up their golden caverns,
Pregnant with stores, that India's mines might envy,
The accumulated wealth of toiling ages.
Dem. That wealth, too sacred for their country's use!
That wealth, too pleasing to be lost for freedom!
That wealth, which, granted to their weeping prince,
Had ranged embattled nations at our gates—
But thus reserved to lure the wolves of Turkey,
Adds shame to grief, and infamy to ruin.
Lamenting avarice now too late discovers
Her own neglected, in the public safety.
Leon. Reproach not misery.——The sons of Greece,
Ill-fated race! so oft besieged in vain,
With false security beheld invasion.
Why should they fear!—That Power, that kindly spreads
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,
To warn the wandering linnet to the shade,
Beheld, without concern, expiring Greece,
And not one prodigy foretold our fate.
Dem. A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it.
A feeble government, eluded laws,
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
And all the maladies of sinking states.
When public villany, too strong for justice,
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?
When some neglected fabric nods beneath
The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,
Must Heaven dispatch the messengers of light,
Or wake the dead to warn us of its fall?
Leon. Well might the weakness of our empire sink
Before such foes, of more than human force;
Some power invisible, from Heaven or hell,
Conducts their armies, and asserts their cause.
Dem. And yet, my friend, what miracles were wrought
Beyond the power of constancy and courage?
Did unresisted lightning aid their cannon?
Did roaring whirlwinds sweep us from the ramparts?
'Twas vice that shook our nerves; 'twas vice, Leontius,
That froze our veins, and withered all our powers.
Leon. Whate'er our crimes, our woes demand compassion.
Each night, protected by the friendly darkness,
Quitting my close retreat, I range the city,
And, weeping, kiss the venerable ruins:
With silent pangs I view the towering domes,
Sacred to prayer; and wander through the streets,
Where commerce lavished unexhausted plenty,
And jollity maintained eternal revels—
Dem. How changed alas!——Now, ghastly desolation
In triumph sits upon our shattered spires;
Now superstition, ignorance, and error,
Usurp our temples, and profane our altars.
Leon. From every palace burst a mingled clamour,
The dreadful dissonance of barbarous triumph,
Shrieks of affright, and wailings of distress.
Oft when the cries of violated beauty
Arose to Heaven, and pierced my bleeding breast,
I felt thy pains, and trembled for Aspasia.
Dem. Aspasia! spare that loved, that mournful name!
Dear hapless maid! tempestuous grief o'erbears
My reasoning powers—Dear, hapless, lost Aspasia!
Leon. Suspend the thought.
Dem. All thought on her is madness:
Yet let me think—I see the helpless maid!
Behold the monsters gaze with savage rapture,
Behold how lust and rapine struggle round her!
Leon. Awake, Demetrius, from this dismal dream;
Sink not beneath imaginary sorrows:
Call to your aid your courage and your wisdom;
Think on the sudden change of human scenes;
Think on the various accidents of war;
Think on the mighty power of awful virtue;
Think on that providence that guards the good.
Dem. O Providence! extend thy care to me,
For courage droops unequal to the combat,
And weak philosophy denies her succours.
Sure some kind sabre, in the heat of battle,
Ere yet the foe found leisure to be cruel,
Dismissed her to the sky.
Leon. Some virgin martyr,

Perhaps, enamoured of resembling virtue,
With gentle hand restrained the streams of life,
And snatched her timely from her country's fate,
Dem. From those bright regions of eternal day,
Where now thou shin'st among thy fellow saints,
Arrayed in purer light, look down on me!
In pleasing visions, and assuasive dreams,
O! soothe my soul, and teach me how to lose thee!
Leon. Enough of unavail'ing tears, Demetrius:
I came obedient to thy friendly summons,
And hoped to share thy counsels, not thy sorrows:
While thus we mourn the fortune of Aspasia,
To what are we reserved?
Dem. To what I know not;
But hope, yet hope, to happiness and honour—
If happiness can be without Aspasia.
Leon. But whence this new-sprung hope?
Dem. From Cali Bassa;
The chief, whose wisdom guides the Turkish counsels.
He, tired of slavery, though the highest slave,
Projects at once our freedom and his own;
And bids us, thus disguised, await him here.
Leon. Can he restore the state he could not save?
In vain, when Turkey's troops assailed our walls,
His kind intelligence betrayed their measures;
Their arms prevailed, though Cali was our friend.
Dam. When the tenth sun had set upon our sorrows,
At midnight's private hour, a voice unknown
Sounds in my sleeping year, 'Awake, Demetrius!
'Awake, and follow me to better fortunes.'
Surprised, I start, and bless the happy dream;
Then, rousing, know the fiery chief Abdallah,
Whose quick impatience seized my doubtful hand,
And led me to the shore where Cali stood,
Pensive, and listening to the beating surge.
There, in soft hints, and in ambiguous phrase,
With all the diffidence of long experience,
That oft had practised fraud, and oft detected,
The veteran courtier half revealed his project.
By his command, equipped for speedy flight,
Deep in a winding creek a galley lies,
Manned with the bravest of our fellow captives,
Selected by my care, a hardy band,
That long to hail thee chief.
Leon. But what avails
So small a force? Or why should Cali fly?
Or how can Cali's flight restore our country?
Dem. Reserve these questions for a safer hour,
Or hear himself; for see, the Bassa comes.

Enter CALI BASSA.

Cali. Now summon all thy soul, illustrious Christian!
Awake each faculty that sleeps within thee,
The courtier's policy, the sage's firmness,
The warrior's ardour, and the patriot's zeal;
If, chasing past events with vain pursuit,
Or wandering in the wilds of future being,
A single thought now rove, recall it home.
But can thy friend sustain the glorious cause,
The cause of liberty, the cause of nations?
Dem. Observe him closely with a statesman's eye,
Thou, that hast long perused the draughts of nature,
And know'st the characters of vice and virtue,
Left by the hand of heaven on human clay.
Cali. His mien is lofty, his demeanour great;
Nor sprightly folly wantons in his air,
Nor dull serenity becalms his eye.
Such had I trusted once as soon as seen;
But cautious age suspects the flattering form,
And only credits what experience tells.
Has silence pressed her seal upon his lips?
Does adamantine faith invest his heart?
Will he not bend beneath a tyrant's frown?
Will he not melt before ambition's fire?
Will he not soften in a friend's embrace,
Or flow dissolving in a woman's tears?
Dem. Sooner these trembling leaves shall find a voice,
And tell the secrets of their conscious walks;
Sooner the breeze shall catch the flying sounds,
And shock the tyrant with a tale of treason.
Your slaughtered multitudes, that swell the shore
With monuments of death, proclaim his courage;
Virtue and liberty engross his soul,
And leave no place for perfidy or fear.
Leon. I scorn a trust unwillingly reposed.
Demetrius will not lead me to dishonour;
Consult in private; call me when your scheme
Is ripe for action, and demands the sword.
[*Going.*
Dem. Leontius, stay.
Cali. Forgive an old man's weakness,
And share the deepest secrets of my soul,
My wrongs, my fears, my motives, my designs.—
When unsuccessful wars, and civil factions,
Embroiled the Turkish state, our sultan's father,
Great Amurath, at my request, forsook
The cloister's ease, resumed the tottering throne,
And snatched the reins of abdicated power
From giddy Mahomet's unskilful hand.
This fired the youthful king's ambitious breast;
He murmurs vengeance at the name of Cali,
And dooms my rash fidelity to ruin.
Dem. Unhappy lot of all that shine in courts!
For forced compliance, or for zealous virtue,
Still odious to the monarch or the people.
Cali. Such are the woes, when arbitrary power,
And lawless passion, hold the sword of justice.
If there be any land, as fame reports,
Where common laws restrain the prince and subject,
A happy land, where circulating power
Flows through each member of the embodied state;
Sure, not unconscious of the mighty blessing,
Her grateful sons shine bright with every virtue;
Untainted with the lust of innovation,
Sure all unite to hold her league of rule

Unbroken as the sacred chain of nature,
That links the jarring elements in peace.
Leon. But say, great Bassa, why the Sultan's anger,
Burning in vain, delays the stroke of death?
Cali. Young, and unsettled in his father's kingdoms,
Fierce as he was, he dreaded to destroy
The empire's darling, and the soldier's boast;
But now confirmed, and swelling with his conquests,
Secure he tramples my declining fame,
Frowns unrestrained, and dooms me with his eyes.
Dem. What can reverse thy doom?
Cali. The tyrant's death.
Dem. But Greece is still forgot.
Cali. On Asia's coast,
Which lately blessed my gentle government,
Soon as the sultan's unexpected fate
Fills all the astonished empire with confusion,
My policy shall raise an easy throne;
The Turkish powers from Europe shall retreat,
And harass Greece no more with wasteful war.
A galley manned with Greeks,—thy charge, Leontius,
Attends to waft us to repose and safety.
Dem. That vessel, if observed, alarms the court,
And gives a thousand fatal questions birth;
Why stored for flight? and why prepared by Cali?
Cali. This hour I'll beg, with unsuspecting face,
Leave to perform my pilgrimage to Mecca;
Which, granted, hides my purpose from the world,
And, though refused, conceals it from the sultan.
Leon. How can a single hand attempt a life,
Which armies guard, and citadels inclose?
Cali. Forgetful of command, with captive beauties,
Far from his troops, he toys his hours away.
A roving soldier seized in Sophia's temple
A virgin, shining with distinguished charms,
And brought his beauteous plunder to the sultan.
Dem. In Sophia's temple!—What alarm!—Proceed.
Cali. The sultan gazed, he wondered, and he loved;
In passion lost, he bade the conquering fair
Renounce her faith, and be the queen of Turkey;
The pious maid, with modest indignation,
Threw back the glittering bribe.
Dem. Celestial goodness!
It must, it must be she!—Her name?
Cali. Aspasia.
Dem. What hopes, what terrors rush upon my soul!
O lead me quickly to the scene of fate;
Break through the politician's tedious forms!
Aspasia calls me, let me fly to save her.
Leon. Did Mahomet reproach or praise her virtue?
Cali. His offers oft repeated, still refused,
At length rekindled his accustomed fury,
And changed the endearing smile and amorous whisper
To threats of torture, death, and violation.
Dem. These tedious narratives of frozen age
Distract my soul! dispatch thy lingering tale;
Say, did a voice from Heaven restrain the tyrant?
Did interposing angels guard her from him?
Cali. Just in the moment of impending fate,
Another plunderer brought the bright Irene;
Of equal beauty, but of softer mien,
Fear in her eye, submission on her tongue,
Her mournful charms attracted his regards,
Disarmed his rage, and in repeated visits
Gained all his heart; at length his eager love
To her transferred the offer of a crown.
Leon. Nor found again the bright temptation fail?
Cali. Trembling to grant, nor daring to refuse
While Heaven and Mahomet divide her fears,
With coy caresses and with pleasing wiles
She feeds his hopes, and soothes him to delay.
For her, repose is banished from the night,
And business from the day. In her apartments
He lives——
Leon. And there must fall.
Cali. But yet the attempt
Is hazardous.
Leon. Forbear to speak of hazards!
What has the wretch that has survived his country,
His friends, his liberty, to hazard?
Cali. Life.
Dem. The inestimable privilege of breathing!
Important hazard! What's that airy bubble,
When weighed with Greece, with virtue, with Aspasia?
A floating atom, dust that falls unheeded
Into the adverse scale, nor shakes the balance.
Cali. At least this day be calm——If we succeed,
Aspasia's thine, and all thy life is rapture—
See! Mustapha, the tyrant's minion comes.
Invest Leontius with his new command;
And wait Abdalla's unsuspected visits:
Remember freedom, glory, Greece, and love.
[*Exeunt* DEM. *and* LEON.

Enter MUSTAPHA.

Mus. By what enchantment does this lovely Greek
Hold in her chains the captivated sultan?
He tires his favourites with Irene's praise,
And seeks the shades to muse upon Irene;
Irene steals unheeded from his tongue,
And mingles unperceived with every thought.
Cali. Why should the sultan shun the joys of beauty,
Or arm his breast against the force of love?
Love, that with sweet vicissitude relieves
The warrior's labours, and the monarch's cares.
But will she yet receive the faith of Mecca?
Mus. Those powerful tyrants of the female breast,
Fear and ambition, urge her to compliance;

Dressed in each charm of gay magnificence,
Alluring grandeur courts her to his arms;
Religion calls her from the wished embrace,
Paints future joys, and points to distant glories.
Cali. Soon will the unequal contest be decided;
Prospects obscured by distance faintly strike,
Each pleasure brightens at its near approach,
And every danger shocks with double horror.
Must. How shall I scorn the beautiful apostate!
How will the bright Aspasia shine above her!
Cali. Should she, for proselytes are always zealous,
With pious warmth receive our prophet's law—
Must. Heaven will contemn the mercenary fervour,
Which love of greatness, not of truth, inflames.
Cali. Cease, cease thy censures; for the sultan comes
Alone, with amorous haste, to seek his love.

Enter MAHOMET.

Hail, terror of the monarchs of the world!
Unshaken be thy throne, as earth's firm base,
Live till the sun forgets to dart his beams,
And weary planets loiter in their courses!
Mah. But, Cali, let Irene share thy prayers;
For what is length of days without Irene?
I come from empty noise, and tasteless pomp,
From crowds, that hide a monarch from himself,
To prove the sweets of privacy and friendship,
And dwell upon the beauties of Irene.
Cali. O may her beauties last, unchanged by time,
As those that bless the mansions of the good!
Mah. Each realm, where beauty turns the graceful shape,
Swells the fair breast, or animates the glance,
Adorns my palace with its brightest virgins;
Yet, unacquainted with these soft emotions,
I walked superior, through the blaze of charms,
Praised without rapture, left without regret.
Why rove I now, when absent from my fair,
From solitude to crowds, from crowds to solitude,
Still restless, till I clasp the lovely maid,
And ease my loaded soul upon her bosom?
Mus. Forgive, great sultan, that intrusive duty
Inquires the final doom of Menodorus,
The Grecian counsellor.
Mah. Go, see him die:
His martial rhetoric taught the Greeks resistance;
Had they prevailed, I ne'er had known Irene.
[*Exit* MUS.

Remote from tumult, in the adjoining palace,
Thy care shall guard this treasure of my soul;
There let Aspasia, since my fair entreats it,
With converse chase the melancholy moments.
Sure, chilled with sixty wintry camps, thy blood,
At sight of female charms, will glow no more.
Cali. These years, unconquered Mahomet, demand
Desires more pure, and other cares than love.
Long have I wished, before our prophet's tomb,
To pour my prayers for thy successful reign,
To quit the tumults of the noisy camp,
And sink into the silent grave in peace.
Mah. What! Think of peace while haughty Scanderbeg,
Elate with conquest, in his native mountains,
Prowls o'er the wealthy spoils of bleeding Turkey?
While fair Hungaria's unexhausted vallies
Pour forth their legions, and the roaring Danube
Rolls half his floods, unheard, through shouting camps?
Nor couldst thou more support a life of sloth,
Than Amurath——
Cali. Still full of Amurath! [*Aside.*
Mah. Than Amurath, accustomed to command,
Could bear his son upon the Turkish throne.
Cali. This pilgrimage our lawgiver ordained—
Mah. For those who could not please by nobler service.
Our warlike prophet loves an active faith.
The holy flame of enterprising virtue
Mocks the dull vows of solitude and penance,
And scorns the lazy hermit's cheap devotion;
Shine thou, distinguished by superior merit,
With wonted zeal pursue the task of war,
Till every nation reverence the Koran,
And every suppliant lift his eyes to Mecca.
Cali. This regal confidence, this pious ardour,
Let prudence moderate, though not suppress.
Is not each realm, that smiles with kinder suns,
Or boasts a happier soil, already thine?
Extended empire, like expanded gold,
Exchanges solid strength for feeble splendour.
Mah. Preach thy dull politics to vulgar kings!
Thou know'st not yet thy master's future greatness,
His vast designs, his plans of boundless power.
When every storm in my domain shall roar,
When every wave shall beat a Turkish shore;
Then, Cali, shall the toils of battle cease,
Then dream of prayer, and pilgrimage, and peace!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter ASPASIA *and* IRENE.

Irene. Aspasia, yet pursue the sacred theme;
Exhaust the stores of pious eloquence,
And teach me to repel the sultan's passion.
Still, at Aspasia's voice, a sudden rapture
Exalts my soul, and fortifies my heart.
The glittering vanities of empty greatness,
The hopes and fears, the joys and pains, of life,
Dissolve in air, and vanish into nothing.

Asp. Let nobler hopes, and juster fears, succeed,
And bar the passes of Irene's mind
Against returning guilt.

Irene. When thou art absent,
Death rises to my view, with all his terrors;
Then visions, horrid as a murderer's dream,
Chill my resolves, and blast my blooming virtue;
Stern torture shakes his bloody scourge before me,
And anguish gnashes on the fatal wheel!

Asp. Since fear predominates in every thought,
And sways thy breast with absolute dominion,
Think on the insulting scorn, the conscious pangs,
The future miseries that wait the apostate;
So shall timidity assist thy reason,
And wisdom into virtue turn thy frailty.

Irene. Will not that power, that formed the heart of woman,
And wove the feeble texture of her nerves,
Forgive those fears that shake the tender frame?

Asp. The weakness we lament, ourselves create.
Instructed from our infant years to court,
With counterfeited fears, the aid of man,
We learn to shudder at the rustling breeze,
Start at the light, and tremble in the dark;
Till, affectation ripening to belief,
And Folly frighted at her own chimeras,
Habitual cowardice usurps the soul.

Irene. Not all like thee can brave the shocks of fate;
Thy soul, by nature great, enlarged by knowledge,
Soars unencumbered with our idle cares,
And all Aspasia, but her beauty, is man.

Asp. Each generous sentiment is thine, Demetrius,
Whose soul, perhaps, yet mindful of Aspasia,
Now hovers o'er this melancholy shade,
Well pleased to find thy precepts not forgotten.
O! could the grave restore the pious hero,
Soon would his art or valour set us free,
And bear us far from servitude and crimes!

Irene. He yet may live.

Asp. Alas! delusive dream!
Too well I know him; his immoderate courage,
The impetuous sallies of excessive virtue,
Too strong for love, have hurried him on death.

Enter CALI *and* ABDALLA.

Cali. [*To* ABDALLA, *as they advance.*] Behold our future sultaness, Abdalla;
Let artful flattery now, to lull suspicion,
Glide through Irene to the sultan's ear.
Wouldst thou subdue the obdurate cannibal
To tender friendship, praise him to his mistress.
[*To* IRENE.
Well may those eyes, that view these heavenly charms,
Reject the daughters of contending kings;
For what are pompous titles, proud alliance,
Empire or wealth, to excellence like thine?

Abd. Receive the impatient sultan to thy arms;
And may a long posterity of monarchs,
The pride and terror of succeeding days,
Rise from the happy bed; and future queens
Diffuse Irene's beauty through the world!

Irene. Can Mahomet's imperial hand descend
To clasp a slave? or, can a soul like mine,
Unused to power, and formed for humbler scenes,
Support the splendid miseries of greatness?

Cali. No regal pageant, decked with casual honours,
Scorned by his subjects, trampled by his foes;
No feeble tyrant of a petty state
Courts thee to shake on a dependent throne;
Born to command, as thou to charm mankind,
The sultan from himself derives his greatness.
Observe, bright maid, as his resistless voice
Drives on the tempest of destructive war,
How nation after nation falls before him.

Abd. At his dread name the distant mountains shake
Their cloudy summits, and the sons of fierceness,
That range uncivilized from rock to rock,
Distrust the eternal fortresses of nature,
And wish their gloomy caverns more obscure.

Asp. Forbear this lavish pomp of dreadful praise;
The horrid images of war and slaughter
Renew our sorrows, and awake our fears.

Abd. Cali, methinks yon waving trees afford
A doubtful glimpse of our approaching friends;
Just as I marked them, they forsook the shore,
And turned their hasty steps towards the garden.

Cali. Conduct these queens, Abdalla, to the palace:
Such heavenly beauty, formed for adoration,
The pride of monarchs, the reward of conquest—
Such beauty must not shine to vulgar eyes.
[*Exeunt* ABD. *and* ASP.
How Heaven, in scorn of human arrogance,
Commits to trivial chance, the fate of nations!
While, with incessant thought, laborious man
Extends his mighty schemes of wealth and power,
And towers and triumphs in ideal greatness,
Some accidental gust of opposition
Blasts all the beauties of his new creation,

O'erturns the fabric of presumptuous reason,
And whelms the swelling architect beneath it!
Had not the breeze untwined the meeting boughs,
And through the parted shade disclosed the Greeks,
The important hour had passed unheeded by,
In all the sweet oblivion of delight,
In all the fopperies of meeting lovers;
In sighs and tears, in transports and embraces,
In soft complaints, and idle protestations.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* LEONTIUS.

Could omens fright the resolute and wise,
Well might we fear impending disappointments.
Leon. Your artful suit, your monarch's fierce denial,
The cruel doom of hapless Menodorus——
Dem. And your new charge, that dear, that heavenly maid—
Leon. All this we know already from Abdalla.
Dem. Such slight defeats but animate the brave
To stronger efforts, and maturer counsels.
Cali. My doom confirmed establishes my purpose;
Calmly he heard, till Amurath's resumption
Rose to his thought, and set his soul on fire:
When from his lips the fatal name burst out,
A sudden pause the imperfect sense suspended,
Like the dread stillness of condensing storms.
Dem. The loudest cries of nature urge us forward;
Despotic rage pursues the life of Cali;
His groaning country claims Leontius' aid;
And yet another voice—forgive me, Greece—
The powerful voice of love, inflames Demetrius,
Each lingering hour alarms me for Aspasia.
Cali. What passions reign among thy crew, Leontius?
Does cheerless diffidence oppress their hearts?
Or sprightly hope exalt their kindling spirits?
Do they with pain repress the struggling shout,
And listen eager to the rising wind?
Leon. All there is hope, and gaiety, and courage,
No cloudy doubts, or languishing delays;
Ere I could range them on the crowded deck,
At once a hundred voices thundered round me,
And every voice was liberty and Greece.
Dem. Swift, let us rush upon the careless tyrant,
Nor give him leisure for another crime.
Leon. Then let us now resolve, nor idly waste
Another hour in dull deliberation.
Cali. But see, where, destined to protract our counsels,
Comes Mustapha. Your Turkish robes conceal you—
Retire with speed, while I prepare to meet him
With artificial smiles, and seeming friendship.—
[*Exeunt* DEMETRIUS *and* LEONTIUS.

Enter MUSTAPHA.

I see the gloom, that lowers upon thy brow;
These days of love and pleasure charm not thee;
Too slow these gentle constellations roll;
Thou long'st for stars, that frown on human kind,
And scatter discord from their baleful beams.
Mus. How blest art thou, still jocund and serene,
Beneath the load of business, and of years!
Cali. Sure by some wondrous sympathy of souls
My heart still beats responsive to the sultan's;
I share, by secret instinct, all his joys,
And feel no sorrow, while my sovereign smiles.
Mus. The sultan comes, impatient for his love;
Conduct her hither; let no rude intrusion
Molest these private walks, or care invade
These hours assigned to pleasure and Irene.
[*Exit* CALI.

Enter MAHOMET.

Mah. Now, Mustapha, pursue thy tale of horror.
Has treason's dire infection reached my palace?
Can Cali dare the stroke of heavenly justice,
In the dark precincts of the gaping grave,
And load with perjuries his parting soul?
Was it for this, that, sickening in Epirus,
My father called me to his couch of death,
Joined Cali's hand to mine, and, faultering, cried,
Restrain the fervour of impetuous youth
With venerable Cali's faithful counsels!
Are these the counsels? This the faith of Cali?
Were all our favours lavished on a villain?
Confest?
Mus. Confest by dying Menodorus.
In his last agonies the gasping coward,
Amidst the tortures of the burning steel,
Still fond of life, groaned out the dreadful secret,
Held forth this fatal scroll, then sunk to nothing.
Mah. [*Examining the paper.*] His correspondence with our foes of Greece,
His hand, his seal, the secrets of my soul
Concealed from all but him,—all, all conspire
To banish doubt, and brand him for a villain.
Our schemes for ever crossed, our mines discovered,
Betrayed some traitor lurking near my bosom.
Oft have I raged, when their wide-wasting cannon
Lay pointed at our batteries yet unformed,
And broke the meditated lines of war.
Detested Cali too, with artful wonder,
Would shake his wily head, and closely whisper,
Beware of Mustapha, beware of treason.
Mus. The faith of Mustapha disdains suspicion;
But yet, great emperor, beware of treason;
The insidious Bassa, fired by disappointment—
Mah. Shall feel the vengeance of an injured king.
Go, seize him, load him with reproachful chains;
Before the assembled troops proclaim his crimes;
Then leave him stretched upon the lingering rack,
Amidst the camp to howl his life away.

Mus. Should we before the troops proclaim his crimes,
I dread his arts of seeming innocence,
His bland address, and sorcery of tongue;
And should he fall unheard, by sudden justice,
The adoring soldiers would revenge their idol.
Mah. Cali, this day, with hypocritic zeal,
Implored my leave to visit Mecca's temple;
Struck with the wonder of a statesman's goodness,
I raised his thoughts to more sublime devotion.
Now let him go, pursued by silent wrath,
Meet unexpected daggers in his way,
And, in some distant land, obscurely die.
Mus. There will his boundless wealth, the spoil of Asia,
Heaped by your father's ill-placed bounties on him,
Disperse rebellion through the eastern world;
Bribe to his cause and lift beneath his banners
Arabia's roving troops, the sons of swiftness,
And arm the Persian heretic against thee;
There shall he waste thy frontiers, check thy conquests,
And though at length subdued, elude thy vengeance.
Mah. Elude my vengeance! no—my troops shall range
The eternal snows that freeze beyond Meotis,
And Afric's torrid sands, in search of Cali.
Should the fierce North upon his frozen wings
Bear him aloft above the wondering clouds,
And set him in the Pleiad's golden chariots,
Thence should my fury drag him down to tortures;
Wherever guilt can fly, revenge can follow.
Mus. Wilt thou dismiss the savage from the toils,
Only to hunt him round the ravaged world?
Mah. Suspend his sentence——Empire and Irene
Claim my divided soul. This wretch, unworthy
To mix with nobler cares, I'll throw aside
For idle hours, and crush him at my leisure.
Mus. Let not the unbounded greatness of his mind
Betray my king to negligence of danger.
Perhaps the clouds of dark conspiracy
Now roll, full fraught with thunder, o'er your head.
Twice since the morning rose I saw the Bassa,
Like a fell adder swelling in a brake,
Beneath the covert of this verdant arch,
In private conference; beside him stood
Two men unknown, the partners of his bosom;
I marked them well, and traced in either face
The gloomy resolution, horrid greatness,
And stern composure, of despairing heroes;
And, to confirm my thought, at sight of me,
As blasted by my presence, they withdrew,
With all the speed of terror and of guilt.
Mah. The strong emotions of my troubled soul
Allow no pause for art or for contrivance,
And dark perplexity distracts my counsels.
Do thou resolve: For see, Irene comes!
At her approach, each ruder gust of thought
Sinks, like the sighing of a tempest spent,
And gales of softer passion fan my bosom.

CALI *enters with* IRENE, *and departs with* MUSTAPHA.

Mah. Wilt thou descend, fair daughter of perfection,
To hear my vows, and give mankind a queen?
Ah! cease, Irene, cease those flowing sorrows,
That melt a heart, impregnable till now,
And turn thy thoughts henceforth to love and empire.
How will the matchless beauties of Irene,
Thus bright in tears, thus amiable in ruin,
With all the graceful pride of greatness heightened,
Amidst the blaze of jewels and of gold,
Adorn a throne, and dignify dominion!
Irene. Why all this glare of splendid eloquence,
To paint the pageantries of guilty state?
Must I for these renounce the hope of Heaven,
Immortal crowns, and fulness of enjoyment?
Mah. Vain raptures all—For your inferior natures,
Formed to delight, and happy by delighting,
Heaven has reserved no future paradise,
But bids you rove the paths of bliss, secure
Of total death, and careless of hereafter;
While Heaven's high minister, whose awful volume
Records each act, each thought of sovereign man,
Surveys your plays with inattentive glance,
And leaves the lovely trifler unregarded.
Irene. Why, then, has nature's vain munificence
Profusely poured her bounties upon woman!
Whence, then, those charms thy tongue has deigned to flatter,
That air resistless, and enchanting blush,
Unless the beauteous fabric was designed
A habitation for a fairer soul?
Mah. Too high, bright maid, thou rat'st exterior grace;
Not always do the fairest flowers diffuse
The richest odours, nor the speckled shells
Conceal the gem; let female arrogance
Observe the feathered wanderers of the sky,
With purple varied, and bedrop'd with gold;
They prune the wing, and spread the glossy plumes,
Ordained, like you, to flutter and to shine,
And cheer the weary passenger with music.
Irene. Mean as we are, this tyrant of the world
Implores our smiles, and trembles at our feet:
Whence flow the hopes and fears, despair and rapture,
Whence all the bliss and agonies of love?
Mah. Why, when the balm of sleep descends on man,
Do gay delusions, wandering o'er the brain,
Soothe the delighted soul with empty bliss,
To want give affluence, and to slavery freedom?
Such are love's joys, the lenitives of life,

A fancied treasure, and a waking dream.
Irene. Then let me once, in honour of our sex,
Assume the boastful arrogance of man.
The attractive softness, and the endearing smile,
And powerful glance, 'tis granted, are our own;
Nor has impartial Nature's frugal hand
Exhausted all her nobler gifts on you;
Do not we share the comprehensive thought,
The enlivening wit, the penetrating reason?
Beats not the female breast with generous passions,
The thirst of empire, and the love of glory?
Mah. Illustrious maid! new wonders fix me thine;
Thy soul completes the triumphs of thy face.
I thought,—forgive, my fair!—the noblest aim,
The strongest effort of a female soul,
Was but to chuse the graces of the day;
To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,
Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,
And add new roses to the faded cheek.
Will it not charm a mind, like thine exalted,
To shine the goddess of applauding nations,
To scatter happiness and plenty round thee,
To bid the prostrate captive rise and live,
To see new cities tower at thy command,
And blasted kingdoms flourish at thy smile?
Irene. Charmed with the thought of blessing human kind,
Too calm I listen to the flattering sounds.
Mah. O seize the power to bless! Irene's nod
Shall break the fetters of the groaning Christian;
Greece, in her lovely patroness secure,
Shall mourn no more her plundered palaces.
Irene. Forbear—O do not urge me to my ruin!
Mah. To state and power I court thee, not to ruin:
Smile on my wishes, and command the globe.
Security shall spread her shield before thee,
And love infold thee with his downy wings.
If greatness please thee, mount the imperial seat;
If pleasure charm thee, view this soft retreat.
Here every warbler of the sky shall sing;
Here every fragrance breathe of every spring:
To deck these bowers each region shall combine,
And ev'n our prophet's gardens envy thine:
Empire and love shall share the blissful day,
And varied life steal unperceived away. [*Exeunt.*

END

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CALI *enters with a discontented air; to him enters* ABDALLA.

Cali. Is this the fierce conspirator, Abdalla?
Is this the restless diligence of treason?
Where hast thou lingered, while the encumbered hours
Fly labouring with the fate of future nations,
And hungry slaughter scents imperial blood?
Abd. Important cares detained me from your counsels.
Cali. Some petty passion, some domestic trifle,
Some vain amusement of a vacant soul;
A weeping wife, perhaps, or dying friend,
Hung on your neck, and hindered your departure.
Is this a time for softness or for sorrow?
Unprofitable, peaceful, female virtues?
When eager vengeance shows a naked foe,
And kind ambition points the way to greatness?
Abd. Must then ambition's votaries infringe
The laws of kindness, break the bonds of nature,
And quit the names of brother, friend, and father?
Cali. This sovereign passion, scornful of restraint,
Ev'n from the birth affects supreme command,
Swells in the breast, and, with resistless force,
O'erbears each gentler motion of the mind;
As, when a deluge overspreads the plains,
The wandering rivulet, and silver lake,
Mix undistinguished with the general roar.
Abd. Yet can ambition in Abdalla's breast
Claim but the second place: there mighty love
Has fixed his hopes, inquietudes, and fears,
His glowing wishes, and his jealous pangs.
Cali. Love is indeed the privilege of youth;
Yet, on a day like this, when expectation
Pants for the dread event—But let us reason—
Abd. Hast thou grown old amidst the crowd of courts,
And turned the instructive page of human life,
To cant, at last, of reason to a lover?
Such ill-timed gravity, such serious folly,
Might well befit the solitary student,
The unpractised dervise, or sequestered faquir.
Know'st thou not yet, when love invades the soul,
That all her faculties receive his chains?
That reason gives her sceptre to his hand,
Or only struggles to be more enslaved?
Aspasia! who can look upon thy beauties,
Who hear thee speak, and not abandon reason?
Reason! the hoary dotard's dull directress,
That loses all because she hazards nothing:
Reason! the timorous pilot, that, to shun
The rocks of life, for ever flies the port.
Cali. But why this sudden warmth?
Abd. Because I love:
Because my slighted passion burns in vain!
Why roars the lioness distressed by hunger?
Why foam the swelling waves when tempests rise?
Why shakes the ground, when subterraneous fires

Fierce through the bursting caverns rend their way?
Cali. Not till this day thou saw'st this fatal fair;
Did ever passion make so swift a progress?
Once more reflect, suppress this infant folly.
Abd. Gross fires, enkindled by a mortal hand,
Spread by degrees, and dread the oppressing stream;
The subtler flames, emitted from the sky,
Flash out at once, with strength above resistance.
Cali. How did Aspasia welcome your address?
Did you proclaim this unexpected conquest,
Or pay with speaking eyes a lover's homage?
Abd. Confounded, awed, and lost in admiration,
I gazed, I trembled; but I could not speak:
When, even as love was breaking off from wonder,
And tender accents quivered on my lips,
She marked my sparkling eyes, and heaving breast,
And smiling, conscious of her charms, withdrew.
Cali. Now be some moments master of thyself,
Nor let Demetrius know thee for a rival.
Hence! or be calm—To disagree is ruin.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* LEONTIUS.

Dem. When will occasion smile upon our wishes,
And give the tortures of suspense a period?
Still must we linger in uncertain hope?
Still languish in our chains, and dream of freedom,
Like thirsty sailors gazing on the clouds,
Till burning death shoots through their withered limbs?
Cali. Deliverance is at hand; for Turkey's tyrant,
Sunk in his pleasure, confident and gay,
With all the hero's dull security,
Trusts to my care his mistress and his life,
And laughs and wantons in the jaws of death.
Leon. So weak is man, when destined to destruction!
The watchful slumber, and the crafty trust.
Cali. At my command yon iron gates unfold;
At my command the sentinels retire;
With all the licence of authority,
Through bowing slaves, I range the private rooms,
And of to-morrow's action fix the scene.
Dem. To-morrow's action? Can that hoary wisdom,
Borne down with years, still doat upon to-morrow?
That fatal mistress of the young, the lazy,
The coward, and the fool condemned to lose
An useless life in waiting for to-morrow,
To gaze with longing eyes upon to-morrow,
Till interposing death destroys the prospect!
Strange! that this general fraud from day to day
Should fill the world with wretches undetected.
The soldier, labouring through a winter's march,
Still sees to-morrow drest in robes of triumph;
Still to the lover's long-expecting arms,
To-morrow brings the visionary bride;
But thou, too old to bear another cheat,
Learn, that the present hour alone is man's.
Leon. The present hour with open arms invites;
Seize the kind fair, and press her to thy bosom.
Dem. Who knows, ere this important morrow rise,
But fears or mutiny may taint the Greeks?
Who knows if Mahomet's awaking anger
May spare the fatal bow-string till to-morrow?
Abd. Had our first Asian foes but known this ardour,
We still had wandered on Tartarian hills.
Rouse, Cali! shall the sons of conquered Greece
Lead us to danger, and abash their victors?
This night, with all her conscious stars, be witness,
Who merits most, Demetrius or Abdalla.
Dem. Who merits most!—I knew not we were rivals.
Cali. Young man, forbear.—The heat of youth, no more.—
Well—'tis decreed—This night shall fix our fate.
Soon as the veil of evening clouds the sky,
With cautious secrecy, Leontius, steer
The appointed vessel to yon shaded bay,
Formed by this garden on the shaded deep;
There, with your soldiers armed, and sails expanded,
Await our coming, equally prepared
For speedy flight, or obstinate defence.
[*Exit* LEONTIUS.
Dem. Now pause, great Bassa, from the thoughts of blood,
And kindly grant an ear to gentler sounds!
If e'er thy youth has known the pangs of absence,
Or felt the importance of obstructed love,
Give me, before the approaching hour of fate,
Once to behold the charms of bright Aspasia,
And draw new virtue from her heavenly tongue.
Cali. Let prudence, ere the suit be further urged,
Impartial weigh the pleasure with the danger.
A little longer, and she's thine for ever.
Dem. Prudence and love conspire in this request,
Lest, unacquainted with our bold attempt,
Surprise o'erwhelm her, and retard our flight.
Cali. What I can grant, you cannot ask in vain—
Dem. I go to wait thy call; this kind consent
Completes the gift of freedom and of life.
[*Exit* DEMETRIUS.
Abd. And this is my reward—to burn, to languish,
To rave unheeded, while the happy Greek,
The refuse of our swords, the dross of conquest,
Throws his fond arms about Aspasia's neck,
Dwells on her lips, and sighs upon her breast;
Is't not enough, he lives by our indulgence,
But he must live to make his masters wretched?
Cali. What claims hast thou to plead?
Abd. The claim of power,
The unquestioned claim of conquerors and kings!
Cali. Yet, in the use of power, remember justice.

Abd. Can then the assassin lift his treacherous hand
Against his king, and cry, Remember justice?
Justice demands the forfeit life of Cali;
Justice demands—But see the approaching sultan.
Oppose my wishes, and—Remember justice.
Cali. Disorder sits upon thy face—retire.
[*Exit* ABDALLA.

Enter MAHOMET.

Long be the sultan blessed with happy love!
My zeal marks gladness dawning on thy cheek,
With raptures such as fire the pagan crowds,
When pale, and anxious for their years to come,
They see the sun surmount the dark eclipse,
And hail unanimous their conquering god.
Mah. My vows, 'tis true, she hears with less aversion;
She sighs, she blushes, but she still denies.
Cali. With warmer courtship press the yielding fair;
Call to your aid, with boundless promises,
Each rebel wish, each traitor inclination,
That raises tumults in the female breast,
The love of power, of pleasure, and of show.
Mah. These arts I tried, and, to inflame her more,
By hateful business hurried from her sight,
I bade a hundred virgins wait around her,
Soothe her with all the pleasures of command,
Applaud her charms, and court her to be great.
[*Exit* MAHOMET.
Cali. He's gone—Here rest, my soul, thy fainting wing,
Here recollect thy dissipated powers.
Our distant interests, and our different passions
Now haste to mingle in one common centre,
And fate lies crowded in a narrow space.
Yet in that narrow space what dangers rise?—
Far more I dread Abdalla's fiery folly,
Than all the wisdom of the grave divan.
Reason with reason fights on equal terms;
The raging madman's unconnected schemes
We cannot obviate, for we cannot guess.
Deep in my breast be treasured this resolve,—
When Cali mounts the throne, Abdalla dies!
Too fierce, too faithless for neglect or trust.—

Enter IRENE *and* ASPASIA, *with attendants.*

Amidst the splendour of encircling beauty,
Superior majesty proclaims the queen,
And nature justifies our monarch's choice.
Irene. Reserve this homage for some other fair;
Urge me not on to glittering guilt, nor pour
In my weak ear the intoxicating sounds.
Cali. Make haste, bright maid, to rule the willing world;
Awed by the rigour of the sultan's justice,
We court thy gentleness.
Asp. Can Cali's voice
Concur to press a hapless captive's ruin?
Cali. Long would my zeal for Mahomet and thee
Detain me here. But nations call upon me,
And duty bids me choose a distant walk,
Nor taint with care the privacies of love.
[*Exit* CALI.
Asp. If yet this shining pomp, these sudden honours,
Swell not thy soul beyond advice or friendship,
Not yet inspire the follies of a queen,
Or tune thine ear to soothing adulation,
Suspend awhile the privilege of power,
To hear the voice of truth; dismiss thy train,
Shake off the incumbrances of state a moment,
And lay the towering sultaness aside,
[IRENE *signs to her attendants to retire.*
While I foretell thy fate; that office done—
No more I boast the ambitious name of friend,
But sink among thy slaves without a murmur.
Irene. Did regal diadems invest my brow,
Yet should my soul, still faithful to her choice,
Esteem Aspasia's breast the noblest kingdom.
Asp. The soul, once tainted with so foul a crime,
No more shall glow with friendship's hallowed ardour:
Those holy beings, whose superior care
Guides erring mortals to the paths of virtue,
Affrighted at impiety like thine,
Resign their charge to baseness and to ruin.
Irene. Upbraid me not with fancied wickedness;
I am not yet a queen, or an apostate.
But, should I sin beyond the hope of mercy,
If, when religion prompts me to refuse,
The dread of instant death restrains my tongue?
Asp. Reflect, that life and death, affecting sounds!
Are only varied modes of endless being:
Reflect that life, like every other blessing,
Derives its value from its use alone;
Not for itself, but for a nobler end,
The Eternal gave it—and that end is virtue.
When inconsistent with a greater good,
Reason commands to cast the less away:
Thus life, with loss of wealth, is well preserved,
And virtue cheaply saved with loss of life.
Irene. If, built on settled thought, this constancy
Not idly flutters on a boastful tongue,
Why, when destruction raged around our walls,
Why fled this haughty heroine from the battle?
Why, then, did not this warlike amazon
Mix in the war, and shine among the heroes?
Asp. Heaven, when its hand poured softness on our limbs,
Unfit for toil, and polished into weakness,
Made passive fortitude the praise of women:
Our only arms are innocence and meekness.
Not then with raving cries I filled the city,
But, while Demetrius, dear lamented name!
Poured storms of fire upon our fierce invaders,
Implored the eternal Power to shield my country,
With silent sorrows, and with calm devotion.
Irene. Oh! did Irene shine the queen of Turkey,

No more should Greece lament those prayers rejected!
Again should golden splendour grace her cities,
Again her prostrate palaces should rise,
Again her temples sound with holy music:
No more should danger fright, or want distress,
The smiling widows, and protected orphans.
Asp. Be virtuous ends pursued by virtuous means;
Nor think the intention sanctifies the deed:
That maxim, published in an impious age,
Would loose the wild enthusiast to destroy,
And fix the fierce usurper's bloody title.
Then bigotry might send her slaves to war,
And bid success become the test of truth;
Unpitying massacre might waste the world,
And persecution boast the call of Heaven.
Irene. Shall I not wish to cheer afflicted kings,
And plan the happiness of mourning millions?
Asp. Dream not of power thou canst not attain:
When social laws first harmonized the world,
Superior man possessed the charge of rule,
The scale of justice, and the sword of power,
Nor left us aught but flattery and state.
Irene. To me, my lover's fondness will restore
Whate'er man's pride has ravished from our sex.
Asp. When soft security shall prompt the sultan,
Freed from the tumults of unsettled conquest,
To fix his court, and regulate his pleasures,
Soon shall the dire seraglio's horrid gates
Close, like the eternal bars of death, upon thee:
Immured, and buried in perpetual sloth,
That gloomy slumber of the stagnant soul,
There shalt thou view, from far, the quiet cottage,
And sigh for cheerful poverty in vain;
There wear the tedious hours of life away,
Beneath each curse of unrelenting Heaven,
Despair, and slavery, solitude, and guilt!
Irene. There shall we find the yet untasted bliss,
Of grandeur and tranquillity combined.
Asp. Tranquillity and guilt, disjoined by Heaven,
Still stretch, in vain, their longing arms afar,
Nor dare to pass the insuperable bound.
Ah! let me rather seek the convent's cell;
There, when my thoughts, at interval of prayer,
Descend to range these mansions of misfortune,
Oft shall I dwell on our disastrous friendship,
And shed the pitying tear for lost Irene.
Irene. Go, languish on in dull obscurity!
Thy dazzled soul, with all its boasted greatness,
Shrinks at the o'erpowering gleams of regal state,
Stoops from the blaze, like a degenerate eagle,
And flies for shelter to the shades of life.
Asp. On me should Providence, without a crime,
The weighty charge of royalty confer;
Call me to civilize the Russian wilds,
Or bid soft science polish Briton's heroes;
Then shouldst thou see, how false thy weak reproach.
My bosom feels, enkindled from the sky,
The lambent flames of mild benevolence,
Untouched by fierce ambition's raging fires.
Irene. Ambition is the stamp, impressed by Heaven,
To mark the noblest minds; with active heat
Informed, they mount the precipice of power,
Grasp at command, and tower in quest of empire;
While vulgar souls compassionate their cares,
Gaze at their height, and tremble at their danger:
Thus meaner spirits, with amazement, mark
The varying seasons, and revolving skies,
And ask, what guilty power's rebellious hand
Rolls, with eternal toil, the ponderous orbs;
While some archangel, nearer to perfection,
In easy state, presides o'er all their motions,
Directs the planets with a careless nod,
Conducts the sun, and regulates the spheres.
Asp. Well may'st thou hide, in labyrinths of sound,
The cause that shrinks from reason's powerful voice.
Stoop from thy flight, trace back the entangled thought,
And set the glittering fallacy to view.
Not power I blame, but power obtained by crime.
Angelic greatness is angelic virtue.
Amidst the glare of courts, the shout of armies,
Will not the apostate feel the pangs of guilt,
And wish, too late, for innocence and peace?
Curst as the tyrant of the infernal realms,
With gloomy state, and agonizing pomp!

Enter a Maid.

Maid. A Turkish stranger, of majestic mien,
Asks, at the gate, admission to Aspasia,
Commissioned, as he says, by Cali Bassa.
Irene. Whoe'er thou art, or whatsoe'er thy message,
Thanks for this kind relief—[*Aside.*]—with speed admit him.
Asp. He comes, perhaps, to separate us for ever:
When I am gone, remember, Oh! remember,
That none are great, or happy, but the virtuous!
[*Exit* IRENE.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. 'Tis she—my hope, my happiness, my love!—
Aspasia! Do I once again behold thee?
Still, still the same—unclouded by misfortune!
Let my blest eyes for ever gaze—
Asp. Demetrius!
Dem. Why does the blood forsake thy lovely cheek?
Why shoots this chillness through thy shaking nerves?
Why does thy soul retire into herself?
Recline upon my breast thy sinking beauties:
Revive—revive to freedom and to love!
Asp. What well-known voice pronounced the grateful sounds,

Freedom and love? Alas! I'm all confusion;
A sudden mist o'ercasts my darkened soul;
The present, past, and future, swim before me,
Lost in a wild perplexity of joy.
Dem. Such ecstacy of love, such pure affection,
What worth can merit, or what faith reward?
Asp. A thousand thoughts, imperfect and distracted,
Demand a voice, and struggle into birth;
A thousand questions press upon my tongue,
But all give way to rapture and Demetrius!
Dem. O say, bright being! in this age of absence,
What fears, what griefs, what dangers hast thou known?
Say, how the tyrant threatened, flattered, sighed,
Say, how he threatened, flattered, sighed in vain!
Say, how the hand of violence was raised,
Say, how thou call'dst in tears upon Demetrius!
Asp. Inform me, rather, how thy happy courage
Stemmed in the breach the deluge of destruction,
And passed uninjured through the walks of death?
Did savage anger and licentious conquest
Behold the hero with Aspasia's eyes?
And, thus protected in the general ruin,
O say, what guardian power conveyed thee hither!
Dem. Such strange events, such unexpected chances,
Beyond my warmest hope, or wildest wishes,
Concurred to give me to Aspasia's arms,
I stand amazed, and ask, if yet I clasp thee.
Asp. Sure Heaven (for wonders are not wrought in vain,)
That joins us thus, will never part us more.

Enter ABDALLA.

Abd. It parts you now—the hasty sultan signed
The laws unread, and flies to his Irene.
Dem. Fixed and intent on his Irene's charms,
He envies none the converse of Aspasia.
Abd. Aspasia's absence will inflame suspicion;
She cannot, must not, shall not linger here,
Prudence and friendship bid me force her from you.
Dem. Force her! profane her with a touch, and die!
Abd. 'Tis Greece, 'tis freedom calls Aspasia hence;
Your careless love betrays your country's cause
Dem. If we must part—
Asp. No! let us die together.
Dem. If we must part—
Abd. Dispatch! the encreasing danger
Will not admit a lover's long farewell,
The long-drawn intercourse of sighs and kisses.
Dem. Then—O my fair, I cannot bid thee go;
Receive her, and protect her, gracious Heaven!
Yet let me watch her dear departing steps,
If fate pursues me, let it find me here.
Reproach not, Greece, a lover's fond delays,
Nor think thy cause neglected while I gaze;
New force, new courage, from each glance I gain,
And find our passions not infused in vain.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* ASPASIA.

Asp. Enough—resistless reason calms my soul—
Approving justice smiles upon your cause,
And nature's rights entreat the asserting sword.
Yet, when your hand is lifted to destroy,
Think—but excuse a woman's needless caution—
Purge well thy mind from every private passion,
Drive interest, love, and vengeance from thy thoughts,
Fill all thy ardent breast with Greece and virtue!
Then strike secure, and heaven assist the blow!
Dem. Thou kind assistant of my better angel,
Propitious guide of my bewildered soul,
Calm of my cares, and guardian of my virtue!
Asp. My soul, first kindled by thy bright example,
To noble thought and generous emulation,
Now but reflects those beams that flowed from thee.
Dem. With native lustre, and unborrowed greatness,
Thou shin'st, bright maid, superior to distress;
Unlike the trifling race of vulgar beauties,
Those glittering dew-drops of a vernal morn,
That spread their colours to the genial beam,
And, sparkling, quiver to the breath of May;
But when the tempest, with sonorous wing,
Sweeps o'er the grove, forsake the labouring bough,
Dispersed in air, or mingled with the dust.
Asp. Forbear this triumph—still new conflicts wait us,
Foes unforeseen, and dangers unsuspected.
Oft, when the fierce besieger's eager host
Beholds the fainting garrison retire,
And rushes joyful to the naked wall,
Destruction flashes from the insidious mine,
And sweeps the exulting conqueror away:
Perhaps in vain the sultan's anger spared me,
To find a meaner fate from treacherous friendship—
Abdalla—
Dem. Can Abdalla then dissemble?
That fiery chief, renowned for generous freedom
For zeal unguarded, undissembled hate,
For daring truth, and turbulence of honour?
Asp. This open friend, this undesigning hero,
With noisy falsehoods forced me from your arms
To shock my virtue with a tale of love.

Dem. Did not the cause of Greece restrain my sword,
Aspasia should not fear a second insult.
Asp. His pride and love by turns inspired his tongue,
And intermixed my praises with his own;
His wealth, his rank, his honours he recounted,
Till, in the midst of arrogance and fondness,
The approaching sultan forc'd me from the palace;
Then, while he gazed upon his yielding mistress,
I stole, unheeded, from their ravished eyes,
And sought this happy grove in quest of thee.
Dem. Soon may the final stroke decide our fate,
Lest baneful discord crush our infant scheme,
And strangled freedom perish in the birth.
Asp. My bosom harassed with alternate passions,
Now hopes, now fears—
Dem. The anxieties of love!
Asp. Think how the sovereign arbiter of kingdoms
Detests thy false associates' black designs,
And frowns on perjury, revenge, and murder.
Embarked with treason on the seas of fate,
When Heaven shall bid the swelling billows rage,
And point vindictive lightnings at rebellion,
Will not the patriot share the traitor's danger?
Oh, could thy hand, unaided, free thy country,
Nor mingled guilt pollute the sacred cause!
Dem. Permitted oft, though not inspired by Heaven,
Successful treasons punish impious kings.
Asp. Nor end my terrors with the sultan's death;
Far as futurity's untravelled waste
Lies open to conjecture's dubious ken,
On every side confusion, rage, and death;
(Perhaps the phantoms of a woman's fear,)
Beset the treacherous way with fatal ambush;
Each Turkish bosom burns for thy destruction;
Ambitious Cali dreads the statesman's arts,
And hot Abdalla hates the happy lover.
Dem. Capricious man! to good and ill inconstant;
Too much to fear or trust, is equal weakness.
Sometimes the wretch, unawed by heaven or hell,
With mad devotion idolizes honour.
The Bassa, reeking with his master's murder,
Perhaps may start at violated friendship.
Asp. How soon, alas! will interest, fear, or envy;
O'erthrow such weak, such accidental virtue,
Nor built on faith, nor fortified by conscience?
Dem. When desperate ills demand a speedy cure,
Distrust is cowardice, and prudence folly.
Asp. Yet think a moment, ere you court destruction,
What hand, when death has snatched away Demetrius,
Shall guard Aspasia from triumphant lust!
Dem. Dismiss these needless fears—a troop of Greeks,
Well known, long tried, expect us on the shore.
Borne on the surface of the smiling deep,
Soon shalt thou scorn, in safety's arms reposed,
Abdalla's rage and Cali's stratagems.
Asp. Still, still distrust sits heavy on my heart.
Will e'er an happier hour revisit Greece!
Dem. Should Heaven, yet unappeased, refuse its aid,
Disperse our hopes, and frustrate our designs,
Yet shall the conscience of the great attempt
Diffuse a brightness on our future days;
Nor will his country's groans reproach Demetrius.
But how canst thou support the woes of exile?
Canst thou forget hereditary splendours,
To live obscure upon a foreign coast,
Content with science, innocence, and love?
Asp. Nor wealth, nor titles, make Aspasia's bliss.
O'erwhelmed and lost amidst the public ruins,
Unmoved I saw the glittering trifles perish,
And thought the petty dross beneath a sigh.
Chearful I follow to the rural cell;
Love be my wealth, and my distinction virtue!
Dem. Submissive and prepared for each event,
Now let us wait the last award of Heaven,
Secure of happiness from flight or conquest,
Nor fear the fair and learned can want protection.
The mighty Tuscan courts the banished arts
To kind Italia's hospitable shades;
There shall soft leisure wing the excursive soul,
And peace propitious smile on fond desire;
There shall despotic eloquence resume
Her ancient empire o'er the yielding heart;
There poetry shall tune her sacred voice,
And wake from ignorance the western world.

Enter CALI.

Cali. At length the unwilling sun resigns the world
To silence and to rest. The hours of darkness,
Propitious hours to stratagem and death,
Pursue the last remains of lingering light.
Dem. Count not these hours as parts of vulgar time;
Think them a sacred treasure lent by Heaven,
Which, squandered by neglect, or fear, or folly,
No prayer recalls, no diligence redeems.
To-morrow's dawn shall see the Turkish king,
Stretched in the dust, or towering on his throne
To-morrow's dawn shall see the mighty Cali,
The sport of tyranny, or lord of nations.
Cali. Then waste no longer these important moments
In soft endearments, and in gentle murmurs;
Nor lose in love the patriot and the hero.
Dem. 'Tis love combined with guilt alone, that melts
The softened soul to cowardice and sloth;
But virtuous passion prompts the great resolve,
And fans the slumbering spark of heavenly fire.

Retire, my fair; that power, that smiles on goodness
Guide all thy steps, calm every stormy thought,
And still thy bosom with the voice of peace!
Asp. Soon may we meet again, secure and free,
To feel no more the pangs of separation! [*Exit.*
Dem. This night alone is ours—Our mighty foe,
No longer lost in amorous solitude,
Will now remount the slighted seat of empire,
And show Irene to the shouting people:
Aspasia left her sighing in his arms,
And listening to the pleasing tale of power;
With softened voice she dropped the faint refusal,
Smiling consent she sat, and blushing love.
Cali. Now, tyrant, with satiety of beauty,
Now feast thine eyes! thine eyes that ne'er hereafter
Shall dart their amorous glances at the fair,
Or glare on Cali with malignant beams!

Enter LEONTIUS, ABDALLA.

Leon. Our bark, unseen, has reached the appointed bay,
And where yon trees wave o'er the foaming surge
Reclines against the shore: Our Grecian troop
Extends its lines along the sandy beach,
Elate with hope, and panting for a foe.
Abd. The favouring winds assist the great design,
Sport in our sails, and murmur o'er the deep.
Cali. 'Tis well—A single blow completes our wishes;
Return with speed, Leontius, to your charge;
The Greeks, disordered by their leader's absence,
May droop dismayed, or kindle into madness.
Leon. Suspected still?—What villain's poisnous tongue
Dares join Leontius' name with fear or falsehood?
Have I, for this, preserved my guiltless bosom,
Pure as the thoughts of infant innocence?
Have I, for this, defied the chiefs of Turkey,
Intrepid in the flaming front of war?
Cali. Hast thou not searched my soul's profoundest thoughts?
Is not the fate of Greece and Cali thine?
Leon. Why has thy choice, then, pointed out Leontius,
Unfit to share this night's illustrious toils?
To wait remote from action, and from honour,
An idle list'ner to the distant cries
Of slaughtered infidels, and clash of swords!
Tell me the cause that while thy name, Demetrius,
Shall soar triumphant on the wings of glory,
Despised and cursed, Leontius must descend
Through hissing ages, a proverbial coward,
The tale of women, and the scorn of fools.
Dem. Can brave Leontius be the slave of glory?
Glory, the casual gift of thoughtless crouds!
Glory, the bribe of avaricious virtue!
Be but my country free, be thine the praise;
I ask no witness, but attesting conscience,
No records, but the records of the sky.
Leon. Wilt thou, then, head the troop upon the shore,
While I destroy the oppressor of mankind?
Dem. What canst thou boast superior to Demetrius?
Ask to whose sword the Greeks will trust their cause,
My name shall echo through the shouting field;
Demand whose force yon Turkish heroes dread,
The shuddering camp shall murmur out Demetrius.
Cali. Must Greece, still wretched by her children's folly,
For ever mourn their avarice or factions?
Demetrius justly pleads a double title;
The lover's interest aids the patriot's claim.
Leon. My pride shall ne'er protract my country's woes;
Succeed, my friend, unenvied by Leontius.
Dem. I feel new spirit shoot along my nerves,
My soul expands to meet approaching freedom.
Now hover o'er us with propitious wings,
Ye sacred shades of patriots and of martyrs;
All ye, whose blood tyrannic rage effused,
Or persecution drank, attend our call;
And from the mansions of perpetual peace
Descend, to sweeten labours once your own!
Cali. Go, then, and with united eloquence
Confirm your troops; and when the moon's fair beam
Plays on the quivering waves, to guide our flight,
Return, Demetrius, and be free for ever.
[*Exeunt* DEM. *and* LEON.
Abd. How the new monarch, swelled with airy rule,
Looks down, contemptuous, from his fancied height,
And utters fate, unmindful of Abdalla!
Cali. Far be such black ingratitude from Cali!
When Asia's nations own me for their lord,
Wealth, and command, and grandeur shall be thine.
Abd. Is this the recompence reserved for me?
Dar'st thou thus dally with Abdalla's passion?
Henceforward, hope no more my slighted friendship!
Wake from thy dream of power to death and tortures,
And bid thy visionary throne farewell!
Cali. Name and enjoy thy wish—
Abd. I need not name it;
Aspasia's lovers know but one desire,
Nor hope, nor wish, nor live but for Aspasia.
Cali. That fatal beauty, plighted to Demetrius,
Heaven makes not mine to give.
Abd. Nor to deny.
Cali. Obtain her and possess; thou know'st thy rival.
Abd. Too well I know him, since on Thracia's plains
I felt the force of his tempestuous arm,
And saw my scattered squadrons fly before him.

Nor will I trust the uncertain chance of combat;
The rights of princes let the sword decide,
The petty claims of empire and of honour:
Revenge and subtle jealousy shall teach
A surer passage to his hated heart.

Cali. O spare the gallant Greek! in him we lose
The politician's arts, and hero's flame.

Abd. When next we meet, before we storm the palace,
The bowl shall circle to confirm our league;
Then shall these juices taint Demetrius' draught,
[*Shewing a phial.*
And stream destructive through his freezing veins.
Thus shall he live to strike the important blow,
And perish ere he tastes the joys of conquest.

Enter MAHOMET *and* MUSTAPHA.

Mah. Henceforth for ever happy be this day,
Sacred to love, to pleasure, and Irene!
The matchless fair has blessed me with compliance;
Let every tongue resound Irene's praise,
And spread the general transport through mankind!

Cali. Blest prince, for whom indulgent Heaven ordains
At once the joys of paradise and empire,
Now join thy people's, and thy Cali's prayers!
Suspend thy passage to the seats of bliss,
Nor wish for houris in Irene's arms.

Mah. Forbear—I know the long-tried faith of Cali.

Cali. O could the eyes of kings, like those of Heaven,
Search to the dark recesses of the soul,
Oft would they find ingratitude and treason,
By smiles, and oaths, and praises ill disguised.
How rarely would they meet, in crowded courts,
Fidelity so firm, so pure, as mine!

Mus. Yet ere we give our loosened thoughts to rapture,
Let prudence obviate an impending danger.
Tainted by sloth, the parent of sedition,
The hungry janizary burns for plunder,
And growls in private o'er his idle sabre.

Mah. To still their murmurs, ere the twentieth sun
Shall shed his beams upon the bridal bed,
I rouse to war and conquer for Irene.
Then shall the Rhodian mourn his sinking towers,
And Buda fall, and proud Vienna tremble;
Then shall Venetia feel the Turkish power,
And subject seas roar round their queen in vain.

Abd. Then seize fair Italy's delightful coast,
To fix your standard in imperial Rome.

Mah. Her sons malicious clemency shall spare,
To form new legions, sanctify new crimes,
To canonize the slaves of superstition,
And fill the world with follies and impostures,
Till angry Heaven shall mark them out for ruin,
And war o'erwhelm them in their dream of vice.
O could her fabled saints, and boasted prayers,
Call forth her ancient heroes to the field,
How should I joy, midst the fierce shock of nations,
To cross the towerings of an equal soul,
And bid the master genius rule the world!
Abdalla, Cali, go—proclaim my purpose.
[*Exeunt* CALI *and* ABD
Still Cali lives; and must he live to-morrow?
That fawning villain's forced congratulations
Will cloud my triumphs, and pollute the day.

Mus. With cautious vigilance, at my command,
Two faithful captains, Hassan and Caraza,
Pursue him through his labyrinths of treason,
And wait your summons to report his conduct.

Mah. Call them, but let them not prolong their tale,
Nor press too much upon a lover's patience.
[*Exit* MUS.
Whome'er the hope, still blasted, still renewed,
Of happiness, lures on from toil to toil,
Remember Mahomet, and cease thy labour.
Behold him here, in love, in war, successful,
Behold him wretched in his double triumph;
His favourite faithless, and his mistress base.
Ambition only gave her to my arms,
By reason not convinced, nor won by love.
Ambition was her crime, but meaner folly
Dooms me to loath at once, and doat on falsehood,
And idolize the apostate I contemn.
If thou art more than the gay dream of fancy,
More than a pleasing sound without a meaning,
O happiness! sure thou art all Aspasia's.

Enter MUSTAPHA, HASSAN, *and* CARAZA.

Caraza, speak—have ye remarked the Bassa?

Car. Close as we might, unseen, we watched his steps;
His air disordered, and his gait unequal,
Betrayed the wild emotions of his mind.
Sudden he stops, and inward turns his eyes,
Absorbed in thought; then, starting from his trance,
Constrains a sullen smile, and shoots away.
With him Abdalla we beheld—

Mus. Abdalla!

Mah. He wears, of late, resentment on his brow,
Denied the government of Servia's province.

Car. We marked him storming in excess of fury,
And heard, within the thicket that concealed us,
An undistinguished sound of threatening rage.

Mus. How guilt, once harboured in the conscious breast,
Intimidates the brave, degrades the great!
See Cali, dread of kings, and pride of armies,
By treason levelled with the dregs of men.
Ere guilty fear depressed the hoary chief,
An angry murmur, a rebellious frown,
Had stretched the fiery boaster in the grave.

Mah. Shall monarchs fear to draw the sword of justice,
Awed by the crowd, and by their slaves restrained?

Seize him this night, and through the private passage
Convey him to the prison's inmost depths,
Reserved to all the pangs of tedious death.
[*Exeunt* MAH. *and* MUS.
Has. Shall then the Greeks, unpunished and concealed,
Contrive, perhaps, the ruin of our empire,
League with our chiefs, and propagate sedition!
Car. Whate'er their scheme the Bassa's death defeats it,
And gratitude's strong ties restrain my tongue.
Has. What ties to slaves? what gratitude to foes?
Car. In that black day, when slaughtered thousands fell
Around these fatal walls, the tide of war
Bore me victorious onward, where Demetrius
Tore, unresisted, from the giant hand
Of stern Sebalias, the triumphant crescent,
And dashed the might of Asem from the ramparts.
There I became, nor blush to make it known,
The captive of his sword. The coward Greeks,
Enraged by wrongs, exulting with success,
Doomed me to die, with all the Turkish captains.
But brave Demetrius scorned the mean revenge,
And gave me life.
Has. Do thou repay the gift,
Lest unrewarded mercy lose its charms.
Profuse of wealth, or bounteous of success,
When Heaven bestows the privilege to bless,
Let no weak doubt the generous hand restrain,
For when was power beneficent in vain?
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ASPASIA *solus.*

Asp. In these dark moments of suspended fate,
While yet the future fortune of my country
Lies in the womb of Providence concealed,
And anxious angels wait the mighty birth,
O grant thy sacred influence, powerful Virtue!
Attention, rise, survey the fair creation,
Till, conscious of the encircling deity,
Beyond the mists of care thy pinion towers.
This calm, these joys, dear innocence! are thine;
Joys ill exchanged for gold, and pride, and empire.

Enter IRENE *and Attendants.*

Irene. See how the moon, through all the unclouded sky,
Spreads her mild radiance, and descending dews
Revive the languid flowers! thus nature shone
New from the Maker's hand, and fair arrayed
In the bright colours of primeval spring;
When purity, while fraud was yet unknown,
Played fearless in the inviolated shades.
This elemental joy, this general calm,
Is sure the smile of unoffended Heaven.
Yet, why—
Maid. Behold, within the embowering grove,
Aspasia stands——
Irene. With melancholy mien,
Pensive, and envious of Irene's greatness.
Steal, unperceived, upon her meditations—
But see! the lofty maid, at our approach,
Resumes the imperious air of haughty virtue.—
Are these the unceasing joys, the unmingled pleasures,
For which Aspasia scorned the Turkish crown?
[*To* ASP.
Is this the unshaken confidence in Heaven?
Is this the boasted bliss of conscious virtue?
When did content sigh out her cares in secret?
When did felicity repine in deserts?
Asp. Ill suits with guilt the gaieties of triumph.
When daring vice insults eternal justice,
The ministers of wrath forget compassion,
And snatch the flaming bolt with hasty hand.
Irene. Forbear thy threats, proud prophetess of ill,
Versed in the secret counsels of the sky!
Asp. Forbear—but thou art sunk beneath reproach;
In vain affected raptures flush the cheek,
And songs of pleasure warble from the tongue,
When fear and anguish labour in the breast,
And all within is darkness and confusion.
Thus, on deceitful Ætna's flowery side,
Unfading verdure glads the roving eye;
While secret flames, with unextinguished rage,
Insatiate on her wasted entrails prey,
And melt her treacherous beauties into ruin!

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Fly, fly, my love! destruction rushes on us!
The rack expects us, and the sword pursues!
Asp. Is Greece delivered? Is the tyrant fallen?
Dem. Greece is no more; the prosperous tyrant lives,
Reserved, for other lands, the scourge of Heaven.
Asp. Say, by what fraud, what force, were you defeated?
Betrayed by falsehood, or by crowds o'erborne?
Dem. The pressing exigence forbids relation.
Abdalla———
Asp. Hated name! his jealous rage
Broke out in perfidy—Oh, cursed Aspasia!
Born to complete the ruin of her country!
Hide me! oh, hide me from upbraiding Greece!
Oh, hide me from myself!
Dem. Be fruitless grief
The doom of guilt alone, nor dare to seize
The breast where virtue guards the throne of peace!

Devolve, dear maid, thy sorrows on the wretch,
Whose fear, or rage, or treachery, betrayed us!
Irene. [*Aside.*] A private station may discover more!
Then let me rid them of Irene's presence.—
Proceed, and give a loose to love and treason!
[*Withdraws.*
Asp. Yet tell.
Dem. To tell, or hear, were waste of life.
Asp. The life, which only this design supported,
Were now well lost, in hearing how you failed.
Dem. Or meanly fraudulent, or madly gay,
Abdalla, while we waited near the palace,
With ill-timed mirth, proposed the bowl of love.
Just as it reached my lips, a sudden cry
Urged me to dash it to the ground untouched,
And seize my sword with disencumbered hand.
Asp. What cry? The stratagem? Did then Abdalla——
Dem. At once a thousand passions fired his cheek:
Then all is past, he cried—and darted from us:
Nor at the call of Cali deigned to turn.
Asp. Why did you stay, deserted and betrayed?
What more could force attempt, or art contrive?
Dem. Amazement seized us, and the hoary Bassa
Stood torpid in suspence; but soon Abdalla
Returned with force, that made resistance vain,
And bade his new confederate seize the traitors.
Cali, disarmed, was borne away to death;
Myself escaped, or favoured or neglected.
Asp. O Greece! renowned for science and for wealth,
Behold thy boasted honours snatched away!
Dem. Though disappointment blast our general scheme,
Yet much remains to hope. I shall not call
The day disastrous, that secures our flight;
Nor think that effort lost which rescues thee.

Enter ABDALLA.

Abd. At length the prize is mine.—The haughty maid,
That bears the fate of empires in her air,
Henceforth shall live for me; for me alone
Shall plume her charms, and, with attentive watch,
Steal from Abdalla's eye the sign to smile!
Dem. Cease this wild roar of savage exultation;
Advance and perish in the frantic boast!
Asp. Forbear, Demetrius! 'tis Aspasia calls thee;
Thy love, Aspasia, calls; restrain thy sword;
Nor rush on useless wounds with idle courage.
Dem. What now remains?
Asp. It now remains to fly.
Dem. Shall, then, the savage live, to boast his insult,
Tell how Demetrius shunned his single hand,
And stole his life and mistress from his sabre!
Abd. Infatuate loiterer! has fate, in vain,
Unclasped his iron gripe to set thee free?
Still dost thou flutter in the jaws of death,
Snared with thy fears, and mazed in stupefaction?
Dem. Forgive, my fair; 'tis life, 'tis nature calls.
Now, traitor, feel the fear that chills my hand!
Asp. 'Tis madness to provoke superfluous danger,
And cowardice to dread the boast of folly.
Abd. Fly, wretch, while yet my pity grants thee flight;
The power of Turkey waits upon my call.
Leave but this maid, resign a hopeless claim,
And drag away thy life in scorn and safety;
Thy life, too mean a prey to lure Abdalla.
Dem. Once more I dare thy sword; behold the prize!
Behold I quit her to the chance of battle!
[*Quitting* ASP.
Abd. Well may'st thou call thy master to the combat,
And try the hazard, that hast nought to stake;
Alike my death or thine is gain to thee;
But soon thou shalt repent: another moment
Shall throw the attending Janizaries round thee!
[*Exit, hastily,* ABD.
Irene. Abdalla fails; now, Fortune, all is mine!
[*Aside.*
Haste, Murza, to the palace; let the sultan
[*To one of her attendants.*
Dispatch his guards to stop the flying traitors,
While I protract their stay. Be swift and faithful.
[*Exit* MUR.
This lucky stratagem shall charm the sultan,
Secure his confidence, and fix his love. [*Aside.*
Dem. Behold a boaster's worth! Now snatch, my fair,
The happy moment; hasten to the shore,
Ere he return with thousands at his side.
Asp. In vain I listen to the inviting call
Of freedom and of love: My trembling joints,
Relaxed with fear, refuse to bear me forward!
Depart, Demetrius, lest my fate involve thee;
Forsake a wretch abandoned to despair,
To share the miseries herself has caused.
Dem. Let us not struggle with the Eternal Will,
Nor languish o'er irreparable ruins;
Come, haste, and live—Thy innocence and truth
Shall bless our wanderings, and propitiate Heaven.
Irene. Press not her flight, while yet her feeble nerves
Refuse their office, and uncertain life
Still labours with imaginary woe.
Here, let me tend her with officious care,
Watch each unquiet flutter of the breast,
And joy to feel the vital warmth return,
To see the cloud forsake her kindling cheek,
And hail the rosy dawn of rising health.
Asp. Oh, rather, scornful of flagitious greatness,
Resolve to share our dangers and our toils!
Companion of our flight, illustrious exile,
Leave slavery, guilt, and infamy behind!

Irene. My soul attends thy voice, and banished virtue
Strives to regain her empire of the mind:
Assist her efforts with thy strong persuasion!
Sure 'tis the happy hour ordained above,
When vanquished vice shall tyrannize no more.
Dem. Remember, peace and anguish are before thee,
And honour and reproach, and heaven and hell.
Asp. Content with freedom, and precarious greatness.
Dem. Now make thy choice, while yet the power of choice
Kind heaven affords thee, and inviting mercy
Holds out her hand to lead thee back to truth.
Irene. Stay—in this dubious twilight of conviction,
The gleams of reason, and the clouds of passion,
Irradiate and obscure my breast by turns:
Stay but a moment, and prevailing truth
Will spread resistless light upon my soul.
Dem. But since none knows the danger of a moment,
And Heaven forbids to lavish life away,
Let kind compulsion terminate the contest.
[*Seizing her hand.*
Ye Christian captives, follow me to freedom!
A galley waits us, and the winds invite.
Irene. Whence is this violence?
Dem. Your calmer thought
Will teach a gentler term.
Irene. Forbear this rudeness,
And learn the reverence due to Turkey's queen.
Fly, slaves, and call the sultan to my rescue!
Dem. Farewell, unhappy maid! may every joy
Be thine, that wealth can give, or guilt receive.
Asp. And when, contemptuous of imperial power,
Disease shall chase the phantoms of ambition,
May penitence attend thy mournful bed,
And wing thy latest prayer to pitying Heaven.
[*Exeunt,* DEM. ASP. *with part of the attendants.*

IRENE *walks at a distance from her attendants. After a pause—*

Against the head which innocence secures,
Insidious malice aims her darts in vain,
Turned backwards by the powerful breath of Heaven.
Perhaps even now, the lovers, unpursued,
Bound o'er the sparkling waves. Go, happy bark,
Thy sacred freight shall still the raging main.
To guide thy passage shall the aerial spirits
Fill all the starry lamps with double blaze;
The applauding sky shall pour forth all its beams
To grace the triumph of victorious virtue,
While I, not yet familiar to my crimes,
Recoil from thought, and shudder at myself.
How am I changed! How lately did Irene
Fly from the busy pleasures of her sex,
Well pleased to search the treasures of remembrance,
And live her guiltless moments o'er anew!—
Come, let us seek new pleasures in the palace,
[*To her attendants, going off.*
Till soft fatigue invite us to repose.

Enter MUSTAPHA, *meeting and stopping her.*

Mus. Fair falsehood, stay!
Irene. What dream of sudden power
Has taught my slave the language of command!
Henceforth be wise, nor hope a second pardon.
Mus. Who calls for pardon from a wretch condemned?
Irene. Thy look, thy speech, thy action all is wildness—
Who charges guilt on me?
Mus. Who charges guilt?
Ask of thy heart, attend the voice of conscience—
Who charges guilt? lay by this proud resentment,
That fires thy cheek, and elevates thy mien,
Nor thus usurp the dignity of virtue.
Review this day.
Irene. Whate'er thy accusation,
The sultan is my judge.
Mus. That hope is past;
Hard was the strife of justice and of love,
But now 'tis o'er, and justice has prevailed.
Know'st thou not Cali? know'st thou not Demetrius?
Irene. Bold slave, I know them both—I know them traitors.
Mus. Perfidious!—yes—too well thou know'st them traitors.
Irene. Their treason throws no stain upon Irene.
This day has proved my fondness for the sultan.
He knew Irene's truth.
Mus. The sultan knows it;
He knows how near apostacy to treason—
But 'tis not mine to judge—I scorn and leave thee.
I go, lest vengeance urge my hand to blood,
To blood, too mean to stain a soldier's sabre.
[*Exit* MUS
Irene. Go, blustering slave!—He has not heard of Murza;
That dexterous message frees me from suspicion.

Enter HASSAN, CARAZA, *with mutes, who throw the black robe upon* IRENE, *and sign to her attendants to withdraw.*

Has. Forgive, fair excellence, the unwilling tongue,
The tongue, that, forced by strong necessity,
Bids beauty, such as thine, prepare to die!
Irene. What wild mistake is this! Take hence with speed,
Your robe of mourning, and your dogs of death!
Quick from my sight, you inauspicious monsters!
Nor dare henceforth to shock Irene's walks!
Has. Alas! they come, commanded by the sultan,
The unpitying ministers of Turkish justice,
Nor dare to spare the life his frown condemns.
Irene. Are these the rapid thunderbolts of war
That pour with sudden violence on kingdoms,

And spread their flames resistless o'er the world?
What sleepy charms benumb these active heroes,
Depress their spirits, and retard their speed
Beyond the fear of lingering punishment?
Aspasia, now within her lover's arms,
Securely sleeps, and, in delightful dreams,
Smiles at the threatenings of defeated rage.
Car. We come, bright virgin, though relenting nature
Shrinks at the hated task, for thy destruction;
When, summoned by the sultan's clamorous fury,
We asked, with timorous tongue, the offender's name,
He struck his tortured breast, and roared, 'Irene!'
We started at the sound; again enquired;
Again his thundering voice returned, 'Irene!'
Irene. Whence is this rage? what barbarous tongue has wronged me?
What fraud misleads him, or what crimes incense?
Has. Expiring Cali named Irene's chamber
The place appointed for his master's death.
Irene. Irene's chamber! From my faithful bosom
Far be the thought!—But hear my protestation.
Car. 'Tis ours, alas! to punish, not to judge!
Not called to try the cause, we heard the sentence,
Ordained the mournful messengers of death.
Irene. Some ill-designing statesman's base intrigue!
Some cruel stratagem of jealous beauty!
Perhaps yourselves the villains that defame me,
Now haste to murder, ere returning thought
Recall the extorted doom.—It must be so;
Confess your crime, or lead me to the sultan.
There, dauntless truth shall blast the vile accuser;
Then shall you feel what language cannot utter,
Each piercing torture, every change of pain,
That vengeance can invent, or power inflict.

Enter ABDALLA, *he stops short and listens.*

Abd. [*Aside.*] All is not lost, Abdalla! see the queen,
See the last witness of thy guilt and fear,
Enrobed in death—Dispatch her, and be great.
Car. Unhappy fair! Compassion calls upon me
To check this torrent of imperious rage.
While unavailing anger crowds thy tongue
With idle threats and fruitless exclamation,
The fraudful moments ply their silent wings,
And steal thy life away. Death's horrid angel
Already shakes his bloody sabre o'er thee.
The raging sultan burns till our return,
Curses the dull delays of lingering mercy,
And thinks his fatal mandates ill obeyed.
Abd. Is then your sovereign's life so cheaply rated,
That thus you parley with detected treason?
Should she prevail to gain the sultan's presence,
Soon might her tears engage a lover's credit;
Perhaps her malice might transfer the charge;
Perhaps her poisonous tongue might blast Abdalla.
Irene. O let me but be heard, nor fear from me
Or flights of power, or projects of ambition!
My hopes, my wishes, terminate in life,
A little life for grief, and for repentance.
Abd. I marked her wily messenger afar,
And saw him skulking in the closest walks:
I guessed her dark designs, and warned the sultan,
And bring her former sentence new confirmed.
Has. Then call it not our cruelty, nor crime;
Deem us not deaf to woe, nor blind to beauty,
That, thus constrained, we speed the stroke of death. [*Beckons the mutes.*
Irene. O name not death! distraction and amazement,
Horror and agony, are in that sound!
Let me but live, heap woes on woes upon me;
Hide me with murderers in the dungeon's gloom;
Send me to wander on some pathless shore;
Let shame and hooting infamy pursue me;
Let slavery harass, and let hunger gripe!
Car. Could we reverse the sentence of the sultan,
Our bleeding bosoms plead Irene's cause.
But cries and tears are vain; prepare, with patience,
To meet that fate we can delay no longer.
[*The mutes, at the sign, lay hold of her.*
Abd. Dispatch, ye lingering slaves! or nimbler hands,
Quick at my call, shall execute your charge;
Dispatch, and learn a fitter time for pity.
Irene. Grant me one hour, O grant me but a moment,
And bounteous Heaven repay the mighty mercy
With peaceful death, and happiness eternal!
Car. The prayer I cannot grant——I dare not hear.
Short be thy pains. [*Signs again to the mutes.*
Irene. Unutterable anguish!
Guilt and despair! pale spectres grin around me,
And stun me with the yellings of damnation!
O, hear my prayers! accept, all-pitying Heaven,
These tears, these pangs, these last remains of life,
Nor let the crimes of this detested day
Be charged upon my soul. O, mercy! mercy!
[*Mutes force her out.*
Abd. [*Aside.*] Safe in her death, and in Demetrius' flight,
Abdalla, bid thy troubled breast be calm;
Now shalt thou shine the darling of the sultan,
The plot all Cali's, the detection thine.
Has. [*To* CAR.] Does not thy bosom, for I know thee tender,
A stranger to the oppressor's savage joy,
Melt at Irene's fate, and share her woes?
Car. Her piercing cries yet fill the loadedar,
Dwell on my ear, and sadden all my soul:
But let us try to clear our clouded brows,
And tell the horrid tale with cheerful face;
The stormy sultan rages at our stay.
Abd. Frame your report with circumspective art,
Inflame her crimes, exalt your own obedience,
But let no thoughtless hint involve Abdalla.

Car. What need of caution to report the fate
Of her the sultan's voice condemned to die?
Or why should he, whose violence of duty
Has served his prince so well, demand our silence?
Abd. Perhaps my zeal, too fierce, betrayed my prudence;
Perhaps my warmth exceeded my commission;
Perhaps—I will not stoop to plead my cause,
Or argue with the slave that saved Demetrius.
Car. From his escape learn thou the power of virtue,
Nor hope his fortune while thou want'st his worth.
Has. The sultan comes, still gloomy, still enraged.

Enter MAHOMET *and* MUSTAPHA.

Mah. Where's this fair traitress? Where's this smiling mischief,
Whom neither vows could fix, nor favours bind?
Has. Thine orders, mighty sultan! are performed,
And all Irene now is breathless clay!
Mah. Your hasty zeal defrauds the claim of justice,
And disappointed vengeance burns in vain;
I came to heighten tortures by reproach,
And add new terrors to the face of death.—
Was this the maid whose love I bought with empire!
True, she was fair; the smile of innocence
Played on her cheek—So shone the first apostate—
Irene's chamber! Did not roaring Cali,
Just as the rack forced out his struggling soul,
Name, for the scene of death, Irene's chamber?
Mus. His breath, prolonged but to detect her treason,
Then, in short sighs, forsook his broken frame.
Mah. Decreed to perish in Irene's chamber!
There had she lulled me with endearing falsehoods,
Clasped in her arms, or slumbering on her breast,
And bared my bosom to the ruffian's dagger.

Enter MURZA.

Mur. Forgive, great sultan! that, by fate prevented,
I bring a tardy message from Irene.
Mah. Some artful wile of counterfeited love!
Some soft decoy to lure me to destruction!
And thou, the cursed accomplice of her treason,
Declare thy message, and expect thy doom.
Mur. The queen requested, that a chosen troop
Might intercept the traitor Greek, Demetrius,
Then lingering with his captive mistress here.
Mus. The Greek, Demetrius, whom the expiring Bassa
Declared the chief associate of his guilt!
Mah. A chosen troop—to intercept—Demetrius—
The queen requested—Wretch, repeat the message;
And if one varied accent prove thy falsehood,
Or but one moment's pause betray confusion,
Those trembling limbs—Speak out, thou shivering traitor!
Mur. The queen requested—
Mah. Who? the dead Irene?
Was she then guiltless! Has my thoughtless rage
Destroyed the fairest workmanship of heaven!
Doomed her to death, unpitied and unheard,
Amidst her kind solicitudes for me!
Ye slaves of cruelty, ye tools of rage,
[*To* HAS. *and* CAR.
Ye blind officious ministers of folly,
Could not her charms repress your zeal for murder?
Could not her prayers, her innocence, her tears,
Suspend the dreadful sentence for an hour?
One hour had freed me from the fatal error;
One hour had saved me from despair and madness.
Car. Your fierce impatience forced us from your presence,
Urged us to speed, and bade us banish pity,
Nor trust our passions with her fatal charms.
Mah. What hadst thou lost by slighting those commands?
Thy life perhaps—Were but Irene spared,
Well if a thousand lives like thine had perished!
Such beauty, sweetness, love, were cheaply bought,
With half the grovelling slaves that load the globe.
Mus. Great is thy woe! but think, illustrious sultan,
Such ills are sent for souls like thine to conquer.
Shake off this weight of unavailing grief;
Rush to the war, display thy dreadful banners,
And lead thy troops victorious round the world.
Mah. Robbed of the maid, with whom I wished to triumph,
No more I burn for fame or for dominion;
Success and conquests now are empty sounds.
Remorse and anguish seize on all my breast;
Those groves, whose shades embowered the dear Irene,
Heard her last cries, and fanned her dying beauties,
Shall hide me from the tasteless world for ever.
[MAH. *goes out and returns.*
Yet ere I quit the sceptre of dominion,
Let one just act conclude the hateful day.
Hew down, ye guards, those vassals of destruction, [*Pointing to* HAS. *and* CAR.
Those hounds of blood, that catch the hint to kill;
Bear off, with eager haste, the unfinished sentence,
And speed the stroke, lest mercy should o'ertake them.
Car. Then hear, great Mahomet, the voice of truth!
Mah. Hear? shall I hear thee! didst thou hear Irene?
Car. Hear but a moment!
Mah. Hadst thou heard a moment,

Thou might'st have lived, for thou hadst spared Irene.
Car. I heard her, pitied her, and wished to save her.
Mah. And wished—Be still thy fate to wish in vain!
Car. I heard, and softened, till Abdalla brought
Her final doom, and hurried her destruction.
Mah. Abdalla brought her doom! Abdalla brought it!
The wretch, whose guilt, declared by tortured Cali,
My rage and grief had hid from my remembrance!
Abdalla brought her doom!
Has. Abdalla brought it,
While she yet begged to plead her cause before thee.
Mah. O seize me, madness! Did she call on me?
I feel, I see the ruffian's barbarous rage.
He seized her melting in the fond appeal,
And stopped the heavenly voice that called on me.
My spirits fail; awhile support me, vengeance—
Be just, ye slaves, and to be just, be cruel!
Contrive new racks, imbitter every pang,
Inflict whatever treason can deserve,
Which murdered innocence that called on me.
[*Exeunt* MAH. ABD. *&c.*
Must. [*To* MUR.] What plagues, what tortures are in store for thee,
Thou sluggish idler, dilatory slave!
Behold the model of consummate beauty,
Torn from the mourning earth by thy neglect.
Mur. Such was the will of Heaven—A band of Greeks,
That marked my course, suspicious of my purpose,
Rushed out and seized me, thoughtless and unarmed,
Breathless, amazed, and on the guarded beach
Detained me, till Demetrius set me free.
Mus. So sure the fall of greatness raised on crimes;
So fixed the justice of all-conscious Heaven.
When haughty guilt exults with impious joy,
Mistake shall blast, or accident destroy;
Weak man, with erring rage, may throw the dart,
But Heaven shall guide it to the guilty heart.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY ASPASIA.

MARRY a Turk! a haughty tyrant king,
Who thinks us women born to dress and sing,
To please his fancy—see no other man—
Let him persuade me to it—if he can:
Besides, he has fifty wives; and who can bear
To have the fiftieth part her paltry share?
'Tis true, the fellow's handsome, strait and tall;
But how the devil should he please us all?
My swain is little—true—but be it known,
My pride's to have that little all my own.
Men will be ever to their errors blind,
Where woman's not allow'd to speak her mind;
I swear this eastern pageantry is nonsense,
And for one man—one wife's enough in conscience.
In vain proud man usurps what's woman's due;
For us alone, they honour's paths pursue:
Inspir'd by us, they glory's heights ascend;
Woman the source, the object, and the end.
Though wealth and power and glory they receive,
These all are trifles, to what we can give.
For us the statesman labours, hero fights,
Bears toilsome days, and wakes long tedious nights;
And when blest peace has silenc'd war's alarms,
Receives his full reward in beauty's arms.

THE

ROMAN FATHER.

BY

WHITEHEAD.

PROLOGUE.

BRITONS, to-night, in native pomp we come,
True heroes all, from virtuous ancient Rome;
In those far distant times, when Romans knew
The sweets of guarded liberty, like you;
And, safe from ills which force or faction brings,
Saw freedom reign beneath the smile of kings.
Yet, from such times, and such plain chiefs as these,
What can we frame, a polish'd age to please?
Say, can you listen to the artless woes
Of an old tale, which every school-boy knows?
Where to your hearts alone the scenes apply,
No merit theirs but pure simplicity?
Our bard has play'd a most adventurous part,
And turn'd upon himself the critic's art:
Stripp'd each luxuriant plume from fancy's wings,
And torn up similies from vulgar things:
Nay, even each moral, sentimental stroke,
Where not the character but poet spoke,
He lopp'd, as foreign to his chaste design,
Nor spar'd a useless though a golden line.
These are his arts; if these cannot atone
For all those nameless errors yet unknown,
If, shunning faults which nobler bards commit,
He wants the force to strike th' attentive pit,
Be just, and tell him so; he asks advice,
Willing to learn, and would not ask it twice.
Your kind applause may bid him write—beware!
Or kinder censure teach him to forbear.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

TULLUS HOSTILIUS, *king of Rome.*
HORATIUS, *a Roman senator.*
PUBLIUS HORATIUS, *his son.*
VALERIUS, *a young Patrician.*

WOMEN.

HORATIA, *daughter to Horatius.*
VALERIA, *sister to Valerius.*

Citizens, Guards, and Attendants.

SCENE,—*Rome.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* HORATIUS'S *House.*

A Soldier crosses the Stage, HORATIA *following.*

Horatia. Stay, soldier. As you parted from my father,
Something I overheard, of near concern,
But all imperfectly. Said you not Alba
Was on the brink of fate, and Rome determined,
This day, to crush her haughty rival's power,
Or perish in the attempt?
Sold. 'Twas so resolved
This morning, lady, ere I left the camp.
Our heroes are tired out with lingering war,
And half-unmeaning fight.
Horatia. Alas! I hoped
The kind remorse, which touched the kindred states,
And made their swords fall lightly on the breasts
Of foes they could not hate, might have produced
A milder resolution. Then this day
Is fixed for death or conquest? [*He bows.*] To me death,
Whoever conquers! [*Aside.*] I detain you, sir.
Commend me to my brothers; say, I wish——
But wherefore should I wish? The gods will crown
Their virtues with the just success they merit—
Yet let me ask you, sir——
Sold. My duty, lady,
Commands me hence. Ere this they have engaged;
And conquest's self would lose its charms to me,
Should I not share the danger.

As the Soldier goes out, VALERIA *enters, who looks first on him, and then on* HORATIA.

Valeria. My dear Horatia, wherefore wilt thou court
The means to be unhappy? Still enquiring,
Still more to be undone. I heard it too;
And flew to find thee, ere the fatal news
Had hurt thy quiet, that thou might'st have learnt it
From a friend's tongue, and dressed in gentler terms.
Horatia. Oh, I am lost, Valeria, lost to virtue!
Even while my country's fate, the fate of Rome,
Hangs on the conqueror's sword, this breast can feel
A softer passion, and divide its cares!
Alba to me is Rome. Wouldst thou believe it?
I would have sent, by him thou saw'st departing,
Kind wishes to my brothers; but my tongue
Denied its office, and this rebel heart
Even dreaded their success. Oh, Curiatius!
Why art thou there, or why an enemy?
Valeria. Forbear this self-reproach; he is thy husband,
And who can blame thy fears? If fortune make him
Awhile thy country's foe, she cannot cancel
Vows registered above. What though the priest
Had not confirmed it at the sacred altar;
Yet were your hearts united, and that union
Approved by each consenting parent's choice.
Your brothers loved him as a friend, a brother:
And all the ties of kindred pleaded for him,
And still must plead, whate'er our heroes teach us,
Of patriot strength. Our country may demand
We should be wretched, and we must obey;
But never can require us not to feel,
That we are miserable: nature there
Will give the lie to virtue.
Horatia. True; yet sure
A Roman virgin should be more than woman.
Are we not early taught to mock at pain,
And look on danger with undaunted eyes?—
But what are dangers? what the ghastliest form
Of death itself?—Oh, were I only bid,
To rush into the Tiber's foaming wave,
Swoln with uncommon floods, or from the height
Of yon Tarpeian rock, whose giddy steep
Has turned me pale with horror at the sight,
I'd think the task were nothing!—but to bear
These strange vicissitudes of torturing pain,
To fear, to doubt, and to despair as I do!——
Valeria. And why despair? Have we so idly learned
The noblest lessons of our infant days,
Our trust above? Does there not still remain
The wretch's last retreat—the gods, Horatia?
'Tis from their awful wills our evils spring,
And at their altars may we find relief.
Say, shall we thither?—Look not thus dejected,
But answer me. A confidence in them,
E'en in this crisis of our fate, will calm
Thy troubled soul, and fill thy breast with hope.
Horatia. Talk not of hope; the wretch on yonder plain,
Who hears the victor's threats, and sees his sword
Impending o'er him, feels no surer fate,
Though less delayed than mine! What should I hope?
That Alba conquer?—Cursed be every thought
Which looks that way! The shrieks of captive matrons
Sound in my ears!
Valeria. Forbear, forbear, Horatia,
Nor fright me with the thought. Rome cannot fall.
Think on the glorious battles she has fought;
Has she once failed, though oft exposed to danger?
And has not her immortal founder promised,
That she should rise the mistress of the world?

Horatia. And if Rome conquers, then Horatia dies!
Valeria. Why wilt thou form vain images of horror,
Industrious to be wretched? Is it, then,
Become impossible that Rome should triumph,
And Curiatius live? He must, he shall;
Protecting gods shall spread their shields around him,
And love shall combat in Horatia's cause.
Horatia. Think'st thou so meanly of him?—No, Valeria,
His soul's too great to give me such a trial;
Or could it ever come, I think, myself,
Thus lost in love, thus abject as I am,
I should despise the slave who dared survive
His country's ruin. Ye immortal powers!
I love his fame too well, his spotless honour,
At least I hope I do, to wish him mine
On any terms which he must blush to own.
Hor. [*Without.*] What ho! Vindicius!
Horatia. What means that shout?—Might we not ask, Valeria?
Didst thou not wish me to the temple?—Come,
I will attend thee thither: the kind gods
Perhaps may ease this throbbing heart, and spread
At least a temporary calm within.
Valeria. Alas, Horatia, 'tis not to the temple
That thou wouldst fly; the shout alone alarms thee.
But do not thus anticipate thy fate;
Why shouldst thou learn each chance of varying war,
Which takes a thousand turns, and shifts the scene
From bad to good, as fortune smiles or frowns?
Stay but an hour perhaps, and thou shalt know
The whole at once.—I'll send—I'll fly myself
To ease thy doubts, and bring thee news of joy.
Horatia. Again, and nearer too—I must attend thee.
Valeria. Hark! 'tis thy father's voice; he comes to cheer thee.

Enter HORATIUS *and* VALERIUS.

Horatius. [*Entering.*] News from the camp, my child!—
Save you, sweet maid! [*Seeing* VALERIA.
Your brother brings the tidings, for, alas!
I am no warrior now; my useless age,
Far from the paths of honour, loiters here
In sluggish inactivity at home.
Yet I remember—
Horatia. You'll forgive us, sir,
If with impatience we expect the tidings.
Horatius. I had forgot; the thoughts of what I was
Engrossed my whole attention.—Pray, young soldier,
Relate it for me; you beheld the scene,
And can report it justly.
Val. Gentle lady,
The scene was piteous, though its end be peace.
Horatia. Peace? O, my fluttering heart! by what kind means?
Val. 'Twere tedious, lady, and unnecessary,
To paint the disposition of the field;
Suffice it, we were armed, and front to front
The adverse legions heard the trumpet's sound:
But vain was the alarm, for motionless,
And wrapt in thought, they stood; the kindred ranks
Had caught each other's eyes, nor dared to lift
The faultering spear against the breast they loved.
Again the alarm was given, and now they seemed
Preparing to engage, when once again
They hung their drooping heads, and inward mourned;
Then nearer drew, and at the third alarm,
Casting their swords and useless shields aside,
Rushed to each other's arms.
Hor. 'Twas so, just so,
(Though I was then a child, yet I have heard
My mother, weeping, oft relate the story)
Soft pity touched the breasts of mighty chiefs,
Romans and Sabines, when the matrons rushed
Between their meeting armies, and opposed
Their helpless infants, and their heaving breasts,
To their advancing swords, and bade them there
Sheath all their vengeance.——But I interrupt you—
Proceed, Valerius, they would hear the event.
—And yet, methinks, the Albans—pray go on.'
Val. Our king Hostilius, from a rising mound,
Beheld the tender interview, and joined
His friendly tears with theirs; then swift advanced,
Even to the thickest press, and cried, 'My friends,
If thus we love, why are we enemies?
Shall stern ambition, rivalship of power,
Subdue the soft humanity within us?
Are we not joined by every tie of kindred?
And can we find no method to compose
These jars of honour, these nice principles
Of virtue, which infest the noblest minds?'
Horatia. There spoke his country's father! this transcends
The flight of earth-born kings, whose low ambition
But tends to lay the face of nature waste,
And blast creation!—How was it received?
Val. As he himself could wish, with eager transport.
In short, the Roman and the Alban chiefs
In council have determined, that since glory
Must have her victims, and each rival state,
Aspiring to dominion, scorns to yield,
From either army shall be chose three champions,
To fight the cause alone, and whate'er state
Shall prove superior, there acknowledged power
Shall fix the imperial seat, and both unite
Beneath one common head.
Horatia. Kind Heaven, I thank thee!
Blessed be the friendly grief that touched their souls!
Blessed be Hostilius for the generous counsel!
Blessed be the meeting chiefs! and blessed the tongue,
Which brings the gentle tidings!

Valeria. Now, Horatia,
Your idle fears are o'er.
Horatia. Yet one remains.
Who are the champions? Are they yet elected?
Has Rome——
Val. The Roman chiefs now meet in council,
And ask the presence of the sage Horatius.
Hor. [*After having seemed some time in thought.*]
But still, methinks, I like not this, to trust
The Roman cause to such a slender hazard—
Three combatants!—'tis dangerous——
Horatia. [*In a fright.*] My father!
Hor. I might, perhaps, prevent it——
Horatia. Do not, sir,
Oppose the kind decree!
Val. Rest satisfied,
Sweet lady! 'tis so solemnly agreed to,
Not even Horatius's advice can shake it.
Hor. And yet 'twere well to end these civil broils:
The neighbouring states might take advantage of them.
—Would I were young again! How glorious
Were death in such a cause!—And yet, who knows—
Some of my boys may be selected for it——
Perhaps may conquer——Grant me that, kind gods,
And close my eyes in transport!—Come, Valerius,
I'll but dispatch some necessary orders,
And strait attend thee.—Daughter, if thou lov'st
Thy brothers, let thy prayers be poured to Heaven,
That one at least may share the glorious task.
[*Exit.*
Val. Rome cannot trust her cause to worthier hands.—
They bade me greet you, lady.—[*To* HORATIA.
Well, Valeria,
This is your home, I find: your lovely friend,
And you, I doubt not, have indulged strange fears,
And run o'er all the horrid scenes of war?
Valeria. Though we are women, brother, we are Romans,
Not to be scared with shadows, though not proof
'Gainst all alarms, when real danger threatens.
Horatia. [*With some hesitation.*] My brothers, gentle sir, you said were well.
Saw you their noble friends the Curiatii?
The truce, perhaps, permitted it.
Val. Yes, lady,
I left them jocund in your brothers' tent,
Like friends, whom envious storms awhile had parted,
Joying to meet again.
Horatia. Sent they no message!
Val. None, fair one, but such general salutation
As friends would bring unbid.
Horatia. Said Caius nothing?
Val. Caius?
Horatia. Ay, Caius! did he mention me?
Val. 'Twas slightly, if he did, and 'scapes me now——
O yes, I do remember, when your brother
Asked him, in jest, if he had aught to send,
A sigh's soft waftage, or the tender token
Of tresses breeding to fantastic forms,
To soothe a love-sick maid (your pardon, lady),
He smiled, and cried, 'Glory's the soldier's mistress.'
Horatia. Sir, you'll excuse me—something of importance——
My father may have business——Oh, Valeria,
[*Aside to* VALERIA.
Talk to thy brother, know the fatal truth
I dread to hear, and let me learn to die,
If Curiatius has indeed forgot me! [*Exit.*
Val. She seems disordered!
Valeria. Has she not cause?
Can you administer the baneful potion,
And wonder at the effect?
Val. You talk in riddles!
Valeria. They're riddles, brother, which your heart unfolds,
Though you affect surprise. Was Curiatius
Indeed so cold? Poor shallow artifice!
The trick of hopeless love! I saw it plainly.
Yet what could you propose? An hour's uneasiness
To poor Horatia; for be sure by that time
She sees him, and your deep-wrought schemes are air.
Val. What could I do? this peace has ruined me;
While war continued, I had gleams of hope;
Some lucky chance might rid me of my rival,
And time efface his image in her breast.
But now—
Valeria. Yes, now you must resolve to follow
The advice I gave you first, and root this passion
Entirely from your heart; for know, she doats,
Even to distraction doats on Curiatius;
And every fear she felt, while danger threatened,
Will now endear him more.
Val. Cruel Valeria,
You triumph in my pain!
Valeria. By Heaven, I do not;
I only would extirpate every thought
Which gives you pain, nor leave one foolish wish
For hope to dally with. When friends are mad,
'Tis most unkind to humour their distraction;
Harsh means are necessary.
Val. Yet we first
Should try the gentler.
Valeria. Did I not? Ye powers!
Did I not soothe your griefs, indulge your fondness,
While the least prospect of success remained?
Did I not press you still to urge your suit,
Intreat you daily to declare your passion,
Seek out unnumbered opportunities,
And lay the follies of my sex before you?
Val. Alas! thou know'st, Valeria, woman's heart
Was never won by tales of bleeding love:
'Tis by degrees the sly enchanter works,
Assuming friendship's name, and fits the soul
For soft impressions, ere the faultering tongue,
And guilty-blushing cheek, with many a glance
Shot inadvertent, tells the secret flame.
Valeria. True, these are arts for those that love at leisure;

You had no time for tedious stratagem;
A dangerous rival pressed, and has succeeded.
Val. I own my error—yet once more assist me—
Nay, turn not from me, by my soul I meant not
To interrupt their loves.—Yet, should some accident—
'Tis not impossible—divide their hearts,
I might, perhaps, have hope: therefore till marriage
Cuts off all commerce, and confirms me wretched,
Be it thy task, my sister, with fond stories,
Such as our ties of blood may countenance,
To paint thy brother's worth, his power in arms,
His favour with the king, but most of all,
That certain tenderness of soul which steals
All women's hearts; then mention many a fair,
No matter whom, that sighs to call you sister.
Valeria. Well, well, away—Yet tell me, ere you go,
How did this lover talk of his Horatia?
Val. Why will you mention that ungrateful subject?
Think what you've heard me breathe a thousand times,
When my whole soul dissolved in tenderness;
'Twas rapture all; what lovers only feel,
Or can express when felt. He had been here,
But sudden orders from the camp detained him.
Farewell, Horatius waits me—but remember,
My life, nay, more than life, depends on you.
[*Exit.*
Valeria. Poor youth! he knows not how I feel his anguish,
Yet dare not seem to pity what I feel.
How shall I act betwixt this friend and brother?
Should she suspect his passion, she may doubt
My friendship too; and yet to tell it her
Were to betray his cause. No, let my heart
With the same blameless caution still proceed;
To each inclining most as most distrest,
Be just to both, and leave to Heaven the rest!
[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

Enter HORATIA *and* VALERIA.

Horatia. Alas, how easily do we admit
The thing we wish were true! yet sure, Valeria,
This seeming negligence of Curiatius
Betrays a secret coldness at the heart.
May not long absence, or the charms of war,
Have damped, at least, if not effaced his passion?
I know not what to think.
Valeria. Think, my Horatia,
That you're a lover, and have learned the art
To raise vain scruples, and torment yourself
With every distant hint of fancied ill.
Your Curiatius still remains the same.
My brother idly trifled with your passion,
Or might, perhaps, unheedingly relate
What you too nearly feel. But see, your father.
Horatia. He seems transported; sure some happy news
Has brought him back thus early. Oh, my heart!
I long, yet dread to ask him. Speak, Valeria.

Enter HORATIUS.

Valeria. You're soon returned, my lord.
Hor. Returned, Valeria!
My life, my youth's returned; I tread in air!
—I cannot speak; my joy's too great for utterance,
—Oh, I could weep!—my sons, my sons, are chosen
Their country's combatants; not one, but all!
Horatia. My brothers, said you, sir!
Hor. All three, my child,
All three are champions in the cause of Rome.
Oh, happy state of fathers! thus to feel
New warmth revive, and springing life renewed
Even on the margin of the grave!
Valeria. The time
Of combat, is it fixed?
Hor. This day, this hour,
Perhaps, decides our doom.
Valeria. And is it known
With whom they must engage?
Hor. Not yet, Valeria;
But with impatience we expect each moment
The resolutions of the Alban senate.
And soon may they arrive, that, ere we quit
Yon hostile field, the chiefs, who dared oppose
Rome's rising glories, may, with shame, confess
The gods protect the empire they have raised.
Where are thy smiles, Horatia? Whence proceeds
This sullen silence, when my thronging joys
Want words to speak them? Prithee, talk of empire,
Talk of those darlings of my soul, thy brothers.
Call them whate'er wild fancy can suggest,
Their country's pride, the boast of future times,
The dear defence, the guardian gods of Rome!—
By Heaven, thou stand'st unmoved, nor feels thy breast
The charms of glory, the extatic warmth,
Which beams new life, and lifts us nearer Heaven!
Horatia. My gracious father, with surprise and transport
I heard the tidings, as becomes your daughter;
And, like your daughter, were our sex allowed
The nobler privilege which man usurps,
Could die with pleasure in my country's cause.
But yet, permit a sister's weakness, sir,
To feel the pangs of nature, and to dread

The fate of those she loves, however glorious.
And sure they cannot all survive a conflict
So desperate as this.
Hor. Survive! By Heaven,
I could not hope that they should all survive.
No: let them fall. If from their glorious deaths
Rome's freedom spring, I shall be nobly paid
For every sharpest pang the parent feels.
Had I a thousand sons, in such a cause
I could behold them bleeding at my feet,
And thank the gods with tears!

Enter PUBLIUS HORATIUS.

Pub. My father! [*Offering to kneel.*
Hor. Hence!
Kneel not to me—stand off; and let me view
At distance, and with reverential awe,
The champion of my country!—Oh, my boy!
That I should live to this—my soul's too full;
Let this and this speak for me. Bless thee, bless thee! [*Embracing him.*
But wherefore art thou absent from the camp?
Where are thy brothers? Has the Alban state
Determined? Is the time of combat fixed?
Pub. Think not, my lord, that filial reverence,
However due, had drawn me from the field,
Where nobler duty calls; a patriot's soul
Can feel no humbler ties, nor knows the voice
Of kindred, when his country claims his aid.
It was the king's command I should attend you,
Else had I staid till wreaths immortal graced
My brows, and made thee proud indeed to see
Beneath thy roof, and bending for thy blessing,
Not thine, Horatius, but the son of Rome!
Hor. Oh, virtuous pride!—'tis bliss too exquisite
For human sense!—thus, let me answer thee.
[*Embracing him again.*
Where are my other boys?
Pub. They only wait
Till Alba's loitering chiefs declare her champions,
Our future victims, sir, and with the news
Will greet their father's ear.
Hor. It shall not need;
Myself will to the field. Come, let us haste!
My old blood boils, and my tumultuous spirits
Pant for the onset. O, for one short hour
Of vigorous youth, that I might share the toil
Now with my boys, and be the next my last!
Horatia. My brother!
Pub. My Horatia! ere the dews
Of evening fall, thou shalt, with transport, own me;
Shalt hold thy country's saviour in thy arms,
Or bathe his honest bier with tears of joy.
Thy lover greets thee, and complains of absence
With many a sigh, and many a longing look
Sent toward the towers of Rome.
Horatia. Methinks, a lover
Might take the advantage of the truce, and bear
His kind complaints himself; not trust his vows
To other tongues, or be obliged to tell
The passing winds his passion.
Pub. Dearest sister,
He with impatience waits the lucky moment,
That may with honour bear him to your arms.
Didst thou but hear how tenderly he talks,
How blames the dull delay of Alban councils,
And chides the lingering minutes as they pass,
Till fate determines, and the tedious chiefs
Permit his absence, thou wouldst pity him.
But soon, my sister, soon shall every bar,
Which thwarts thy happiness, be far away.
We are no longer enemies to Alba;
This day unites us, and to-morrow's sun
May hear my vows, and make my friend my brother.
Hor. [*Having talked apart with* VALERIA.] 'Tis truly Roman. Here's a maid, Horatia,
Laments her brother lost the glorious proof
Of dying for his country. Come, my son,
Her softness will infect thee; prithee, leave her.
Horatia. [*Looking first on her father, and then tenderly on her brother.*] Not till my soul has poured its wishes for him.—
Hear me, dread God of War! protect and save him! [*Kneeling.*
For thee, and thy immortal Rome, he fights!
Dash the proud spear from every hostile hand
That dare oppose him! may each Alban chief
Fly from his presence, or his vengeance feel!
And when in triumph he returns to Rome,
[*Rising.*
Hail him, ye maids, with grateful songs of praise,
And scatter all the blooming spring before him;
Cursed be the envious brow that smiles not then,
Cursed be the wretch that wears one mark of sorrow,
Or flies not thus with open arms to greet him!

Enter TULLUS HOSTILIUS, VALERIUS, *and Guards.*

Val. The king, my lord, approaches.
Hor. Gracious sir,
Whence comes this condescension?
Tul. Good old man,
Could I have found a nobler messenger,
I would have spared myself the ungrateful task
Of this day's embassy, for much I fear
My news will want a welcome.
Hor. Mighty king!
Forgive an old man's warmth——They have not sure
Made choice of other combatants!—My sons,
Must they not fight for Rome?
Tul. Too sure they must.
Hor. Then I am blest!
Tul. But that they must engage
Will hurt thee most, when thou shalt know with whom.
Hor. I care not whom.
Tul. Suppose your nearest friends,
The Curiatii, were the Alban choice,
Could you bear that? Could you, young man, support
A conflict there?
Pub. I could perform my duty,
Great sir, though even a brother should oppose me.

Tul. Thou art a Roman! Let thy king embrace thee!
Hor. And let thy father catch thee from his arms!
Tul. [*To* PUBLIUS.] Know then, that trial must be thine. The Albans
With envy saw one family produce
Three chiefs, to whom their country dared entrust
The Roman cause, and scorned to be outdone.
Horatia. Then I am lost indeed! was it for this,
For this, I prayed! [*Swoons.*
Pub. My sister!
Valeria. My Horatia!
Hor. Oh, foolish girl, to shame thy father thus!
Here, bear her in.
[HORATIA *is carried in,* VALERIUS *and* VALERIA *follow.*]
I am concerned, my sovereign,
That even the meanest part of me should blast,
With impious grief, a cause of so much glory.
But let the virtue of my boy excuse it.
Tul. It does most amply. She has cause for sorrow.
The shock was sudden, and might well alarm
A firmer bosom. The weak sex demand
Our pity, not our anger; their soft breasts
Are nearer touched, and more exposed to sorrows,
Than man's experter sense. Nor let us blame
That tenderness, which smoothes our rougher natures,
And softens all the joys of social life.
We leave her to her tears.—For you, young soldier,
You must prepare for combat. Some few hours
Are all that are allowed you. But, I charge you,
Try well your heart, and strengthen every thought
Of patriot in you. Think, how dreadful 'tis
To plant a dagger in the breast you love;
To spurn the ties of nature, and forget,
In one short hour, whole years of virtuous friendship.
Think well on that.
Pub. I do, my gracious sovereign;
And think, the more I dare subdue affection,
The more my glory.
Tul. True; but yet consider,
Is it an easy task to change affections?
In the dread onset can your meeting eyes
Forget their usual intercourse, and wear
At once the frown of war and stern defiance?
Will not each look recal the fond remembrance
Of childhood past, when the whole open soul
Breathed cordial love, and plighted many a vow
Of tenderest import? Think on that, young soldier,
And tell me if thy breast be still unmoved?
Pub. Think not, oh, king, howe'er resolved on combat,
I sit so loosely to the bonds of nature,
As not to feel their force. I feel it strongly.
I love the Curiatii, and would serve them
At life's expence: but here a nobler cause
Demands my sword: for all connections else,
All private duties, are subordinate
To what we owe the public. Partial ties
Of son and father, husband, friend, or brother,
Owe their enjoyments to the public safety,
And without that were vain. Nor need we, sir,
Cast off humanity, and, to be heroes,
Cease to be men. As in our earliest days,
While yet we learned the exercise of war,
We strove together, not as enemies,
Yet conscious each of his peculiar worth,
And scorning each to yield; so will we now
Engage with ardent, not with hostile minds,
Not fired with rage, but emulous of fame.
Tul. Now I dare trust thee; go and teach thy brothers
To think like thee, and conquest is your own.
This is true courage, not the brutal force
Of vulgar heroes, but the firm resolve
Of virtue and of reason. He, who thinks,
Without their aid, to shine in deeds of arms,
Builds on a sandy basis his renown;
A dream, a vapour, or an ague fit
May make a coward of him.—Come, Horatius,
Thy other sons shall meet you at the camp,
For now I do bethink me, 'tis not fit
They should behold their sister thus alarmed.
Haste, soldier, and detain them.
[*To one of the guards.*
Hor. Gracious sir,
We'll follow on the instant.
Tul. Then, farewell!
When next we meet, 'tis Rome and liberty!
[*Exit with guards.*
Hor. Come, let me arm thee for the glorious toil.
I have a sword, whose lightning oft has blazed
Dreadfully fatal to my country's foes;
Whose tempered edge has cleft their haughty crests,
And stained with life-blood many a reeking plain.
This shalt thou bear; myself will gird it on,
And lead thee forth to death or victory. [*Going.*
——And yet, my Publius, shall I own my weakness?
Though I detest the cause from whence they spring,
I feel thy sister's sorrows like a father.
She was my soul's delight.
Pub. And may remain so.
This sudden shock has but alarmed her virtue,
Not quite subdued its force. At least, my father,
Time's lenient hand will teach her to endure
The ills of chance, and reason conquer love.
Hor. Should we not see her?
Pub. By no means, my lord;
You heard the king's commands about my brothers,
And we have hearts as tender sure as they.
Might I advise, you should confine her closely,
Lest she infect the matrons with her grief,
And bring a stain we should not wish to fix
On the Horatian name.

Hor. It shall be so.
We'll think no more of her. 'Tis glory calls,
And humbler passions beat alarms in vain.
[*Exit.*

As HORATIUS *goes off,* HORATIA *enters at another door.*

Horatia. Where is my brother?—Oh, my dearest Publius,
If e'er you loved Horatia, ever felt
That tenderness which you have seemed to feel,
Oh, hear her now!
Pub. What wouldst thou, my Horatia?
Horatia. I know not what I would—I am on the rack,
Despair and madness tear my labouring soul.
—And yet, my brother, sure you might relieve me!
Pub. How? by what means? By heaven, I'll die to do it.
Horatia. You might decline the combat.
Pub. Ha!
Horatia. I do not
Expect it from thee. Prithee, look more kindly!
—And yet, is the request so very hard?
I only ask thee not to plunge thy sword
Into the breast thou lov'st, not kill thy friend;
Is that so hard? I might have said thy brother!
Pub. What canst thou mean? Beware, beware, Horatia:
Thou know'st I dearly love thee, nay, thou know'st
I love the man with whom I must engage.
Yet hast thou faintly read thy brother's soul,
If thou canst think entreaties have the power,
Though urged with all the tenderness of tears,
To shake his settled purpose: they may make
My task more hard, and my soul bleed within me,
But cannot touch my virtue.
Horatia. 'Tis not virtue
Which contradicts our nature, 'tis the rage
Of over-weening pride. Has Rome no champions
She could oppose, but you? Are there not thousands
As warm for glory, and as tried in arms,
Who might, without a crime, aspire to conquest,
Or die with honest fame?
Pub. Away, away!
Talk to thy lover thus. But 'tis not Caius
Thou wouldst have infamous.
Horatia. Oh, kill me not
With such unkind reproaches! Yes, I own
I love him, more——
Pub. Than a chaste Roman maid
Should dare confess.
Horatia. Should dare! What means my brother?
I had my father's sanction on my love,
And duty taught me first to feel its power.
Should dare confess! Is that the dreadful crime?
Alas, but spare him, spare thy friend, Horatius,
And I will cast him from my breast for ever!
Will that oblige thee? Only let him die
By other hands, and I will learn to hate him.
Pub. Why wilt thou talk thus madly? Love him still!
And if we fall the victims of our country,
(Which Heaven avert!) wed, and enjoy him freely.
Horatia. Oh, never, never. What, my country's bane!
The murderer of my brothers! may the gods
First tear me, blast me, scatter me on winds,
And pour out each unheard-of vengeance on me!
Pub. Do not torment thyself thus idly—Go,
Compose thyself, and be again my sister.

Re-enter HORATIUS, *with the sword.*

Hor. This sword in Veii's field—What dost thou here?
Leave him, I charge thee, girl——Come, come, my Publius,
Let's haste where duty calls.
Horatia. What! to the field?
He must not, shall not go; here will I hang—
Oh, if you have not quite cast off affection!
If you detest not your distracted sister——
Hor. Shame of thy race, why dost thou hang upon him?
Wouldst thou entail eternal infamy
On him, on me, on all?
Horatia. Indeed I would not;
I know I ask impossibilities;
Yet pity me, my father!
Pub. Pity thee!
Begone, fond wretch, nor urge my temper thus.
By Heaven, I love thee as a brother ought.
Then hear my last resolve; if fate, averse
To Rome and us, determine my destruction,
I charge thee wed thy lover; he will then
Deserve thee nobly. Or, if kinder gods,
Propitious, hear the prayers of suppliant Rome,
And he should fall by me, I then expect
No weak upbraidings for a lover's death,
But such returns as shall become thy birth,
A sister's thanks for having saved her country.
[*Exit.*
Horatia. Yet stay—Yet hear me, Publius—But one word——
Hor. Forbear, rash girl! thou'lt tempt thy father
To do an outrage might perhaps distract him!
Horatia. Alas! forgive me, sir, I'm very wretched,
Indeed I am—Yet I will strive to stop
This swelling grief, and bear it like your daughter.
Do but forgive me, sir!
Hor. I do, I do——
Go in, my child, the gods may find a way
To make thee happy yet. But on thy duty,
Whate'er reports may reach, or fears alarm thee,
I charge thee come not to the field!
Horatia. I will not,
If you command it, sir. But will you, then,
As far as cruel honour may permit,
Remember that your poor Horatia's life
Hangs on this dreadful contest?

Hor. Lead her in. [*Exit* HORATIA.
[*Looking after her.*] Spite of my boasted strength, her griefs unman me.——
But let her from my thoughts! The patriot's breast
No hopes, no fears, but for his country knows,
And in her danger loses private woes! [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

VALERIUS *and* VALERIA *meeting.*

Val. Now, my Valeria, where's the charming she
That calls me to her? with a lover's haste
I fly to execute the dear command.
Valeria. 'Tis not the lover, but the friend she wants,
If thou dar'st own that name.
Val. The friend, my sister!
There's more than friendship in a lover's breast,
More warm, more tender, is the flame he feels.—
Valeria. Alas! these raptures suit not her distress:
She seeks the indulgent friend, whose sober sense,
Free from the mists of passion, might direct
Her jarring thoughts, and plead her doubtful cause.
Val. Am I that friend? Oh, did she turn her thought
On me for that kind office?
Valeria. Yes, Valerius.
She chose you out to be her advocate
To Curiatius; 'tis the only hope
She now dares cherish; her relentless brother,
With scorn, rejects her tears; her father flies her;
And only you remain to soothe her cares,
And save her ere she sinks.
Val. Her advocate
To Curiatius!
Valeria. 'Tis to him she sends you,
To urge her suit, and win him from the field.
But come, her sorrows will more strongly plead
Than all my grief can utter.
Val. To my rival!
To Curiatius plead her cause, and teach
My tongue a lesson which my heart abhors!
Impossible! Valeria, prithee say
Thou saw'st me not; the business of the camp
Confined me there. Farewell. [*Going.*
Valeria. What means my brother?
You cannot leave her now; for shame, turn back!
Is this the virtue of a Roman youth?
Oh, by these tears!—
Val. They flow in vain, Valeria;
Nay, and thou know'st they do. Oh, earth and Heaven!
This combat was the means my happier stars
Found out to save me from the brink of ruin;
And can I plead against it, turn assassin
On my own life?
Valeria. Yet thou canst murder her
Thou dost pretend to love? away, deceiver!
I'll seek some worthier messenger to plead
In beauty's cause; but first inform Horatia,
How much Valerius is the friend she thought him! [*Going.*
Val. Oh, Heavens! stay, sister; 'tis an arduous task!
Valeria. I know the task is hard, and thought I knew
Thy virtue too.
Val. I must, I will obey thee.
Lead on.—Yet prithee, for a moment leave me,
'Till I can recollect my scattered thoughts,
And dare to be unhappy.
Valeria. My Valerius!
I fly to tell her you but wait her pleasure.
[*Exit.*
Val. Yes, I will undertake this hateful office;
It never can succeed.—Yet, at this instant,
It may be dangerous, while the people melt
With fond compassion.—No, it cannot be;
His resolution's fixed, and virtuous pride
Forbids an alteration. To attempt it
Makes her my friend, and may afford he
A thousand tender hours to move my suit.
That hope determines all. [*Exit.*

SCENE II—*Another Apartment.*

Enter HORATIA *and* VALERIA; HORATIA *with a scarf in her hand.*

Horatia. Where is thy brother? Wherefore stays he thus?
Did you conjure him? did he say he'd come?
I have no brothers now, and fly to him
As my last refuge. Did he seem averse
To thy entreaties? Are all brothers so?
Alas, thou told'st me he spake kindly to thee!
'Tis me, 'tis me he shuns; I am the wretch
Whom virtue dares not make acquaintance with.
Yet fly to him again, entreat him hither,
Tell him, for thy sake, to have pity on me.
Thou art no enemy to Rome, thou hast
No Alban husband to claim half thy tears,
And make humanity a crime!
Valeria. Dear maid,
Restrain your sorrows; I've already told you
My brother will with transport execute
Whatever you command.
Horatia. Oh! wherefore then
Is he away? Each moment now is precious;
If lost, 'tis lost for ever, and if gained,
Long scenes of lasting peace, and smiling years
Of happiness unhoped-for, wait upon it.
Valeria. I will again go seek him; pray, be calm
Success is thine if it depends on him. [*Exit.*
Horatia. Success! alas, perhaps, even now too late
I labour to preserve him; the dread arm

Of vengeance is already stretched against him,
And he must fall. Yet let me strive to save him.
Yes, thou dear pledge, designed for happier hours,
[*To the scarf.*
The gift of nuptial love, thou shalt at least
Essay thy power.
Oft, as I framed thy web,
He sate beside me, and would say in sport,
'This present, which thy love designs for me,
Shall be the future bond of peace betwixt us:
By this we'll swear a lasting love; by this,
Through the sweet round of all our days to come,
Ask what thou wilt, and Curiatius grants it.'
O I shall try thee nearly now, dear youth;
Glory and I are rivals for thy heart,
And one must conquer.

Enter VALERIUS *and* VALERIA.

Val. Save you, gracious lady;
On the first message which my sister sent me
I had been here, but was obliged by office,
Ere to their champions each resigned her charge,
To ratify the league 'twixt Rome and Alba.
Horatia. Are they engaged then?
Val. No, not yet engaged;
Soft pity for a while suspends the onset;
The sight of near relations, armed in fight
Against each other, touched the gazers' hearts;
And senators on each side have proposed
To change the combatants.
Horatia. My blessings on them!
Think you they will succeed?
Val. The chiefs themselves
Are resolute to fight.
Horatia. Insatiate virtue!
I must not to the field; I am confined
A prisoner here; or sure these tears would move
Their flinty breasts. Is Curiatius too
Resolved on death? O, sir, forgive a maid,
Who dares, in spite of modesty, confess
Too soft a passion. Will you pardon me,
If I entreat you to the field again,
An humble suitor from the veriest wretch
That ever knew distress.
Val. Dear lady, speak!
What would you I should do?
Horatia. O bear this to him!
Val. To whom?
Horatia. To Curiatius bear this scarf:
And tell him, if he ever truly loved;
If all the vows he breathed were not false lures
To catch the unwary mind—and sure they were not!
O tell him how he may with honour cease
To urge his cruel right; the senators
Of Rome and Alba will approve such mildness.
Tell him his wife, if he will own that name,
Intreats him from the field; his lost Horatia
Begs, on her trembling knees, he would not tempt
A certain fate, and murder her he loves.
Tell him, if he consents, she fondly swears,
By every god the varying world adores,
By this dear pledge of vowed affection, swears,
To know no brothers and no sire but him;
With him, if honour's harsh commands require it,
She'll wander forth, and seek some distant home,
Nor ever think of Rome or Alba more.
Valeria. Well, well, he will. Do not torment thyself.
[HORATIA *catches hold of the scarf, which she looked upon attentively while* VALERIA *spoke.*
Horatia. Look here, Valeria, where my needle's art
Has drawn a Sabine virgin, drowned in tears
For her lost country, and forsaken friends;
While by her side the youthful ravisher
Looks ardent love, and charms her griefs away.
I am that maid distressed, divided so
'Twixt love and duty. But why rave I thus?
Haste, haste to Curiatius—and yet stay—
Sure I have something more to say to him—
I know not what it was.
Val. Could I, sweet lady,
But paint your grief with half the force I feel it,
I need but tell it him, and he must yield.
Horatia. It may be so. Stay, stay; be sure you tell him,
If he rejects my suit, no power on earth
Shall force me to his arms. I will devise——
I'll die and be revenged!
Valeria. Away, my brother!
But, oh, for pity, do your office justly!
[*Aside to* VALERIUS.
Let not your passion blind your reason now;
But urge your cause with ardour.
Val. By my soul,
I will, Valeria. Her distress alarms me;
And I have now no interest but her's. [*Exit.*
Valeria. Come, dearest maid, indulge not thus your sorrows;
Hope smiles again, and the sad prospect clears.
Who knows the effect your message may produce?
The milder senators ere this perhaps
Have moved your lover's mind; and, if he doubts,
He's yours.
Horatia. He's gone—I had a thousand things—
And yet I am glad he's gone. Think you, Valeria,
Your brother will delay? They may engage
Before he reaches them.
Valeria. The field's so near,
That a few minutes bring him to the place,
And 'tis not probable the senators
So soon should yield a cause of so much justice.
Horatia. Alas! they should have thought on that before.
'Tis now too late. The lion, when he's roused,
Must have his prey, whose den we might have passed
In safety while he slept. To draw the sword,
And fire the youthful warrior's breast to arms
With awful visions of immortal fame,
And then to bid him sheath it, and forget
He ever hoped for conquest and renown—
Vain, vain attempt!
Valeria. Yet when that just attempt
Is seconded by love, and beauty's tears

Lend their soft aid to melt the hero down,
What may we not expect?
Horatia. My dear Valeria!
Fain would I hope I had the power to move him.
Valeria. My dear Horatia, success is yours already.
Horatia. And yet, should I succeed, the hard-gained strife
May chance to rob me of my future peace.
He may not always, with the eyes of love,
Look on that fondness which has stabbed his fame.
He may regret too late the sacrifice
He made to love, and a fond woman's weakness;
And think the milder joys of social life
But ill repay him for the mighty loss
Of patriot-reputation!
Valeria. Pray, forbear;
And search not thus into eventful time
For ills to come. This fatal temper, friend,
Alive to feel, and curious to explore
Each distant object of refined distress,
Shuts out all means of happiness, nor leaves it
In Fortune's power to save you from destruction.
Like some distempered wretch, your wayward mind
Rejects all nourishment, or turns to gall
The very balm that should relieve its anguish.
He will admire thy love, which could persuade him
To give up glory for the milder triumph
Of heart-felt ease and soft humanity.
Horatia. I fain would hope so. Yet we hear not of him.
Your brother, much I fear, has sued in vain.
Could we not send to urge this slow express?
This dread uncertainty! I long to know
My life or death at once.
Valeria. The wings of love
Cannot fly faster than my brother's zeal
Will bear him for your service.
Horatia. I believe it,
Yet doubt it too. My sickly mind unites
Strange contradictions.
Valeria. Shall I to the walls?
I may from hence, with ease, survey the field,
And can dispatch a messenger each moment,
To tell thee all goes well.
Horatia. My best Valeria!
Fly, then; I know thy heart is there already.
Thou art a Roman maid; and though thy friendship
Detains thee here with one who scarce deserves
That sacred name, art anxious for thy country.
But yet for charity think kindly of me;
For thou shalt find by the event, Valeria,
I am a Roman too, however wretched.
[*Exit* VALERIA.
Am I a Roman, then? Ye powers! I dare not
Resolve the fatal question I propose.
If dying would suffice, I were a Roman:
But to stand up against this storm of passions,
Transcends a woman's weakness.—Hark! what noise?
'Tis news from Curiatius! Love, I thank thee!

Enter a Servant.

Well, does he yield? Distract me not with silence!
Say, in one word——
Serv. Your father——
Horatia. What of him?
Would he not let him yield? Oh, cruel father!
Serv. Madam, he's here——
Horatia. Who?——
Serv. Borne by his attendants.
Horatia. What mean'st thou?

Enter HORATIUS, *led in by his Servants.*

Hor. Lead me yet a little onward;
I shall recovery straight.
Horatia. My gracious sire!
Hor. Lend me thy arm, Horatia—So—My child,
Be not surprised; an old man must expect
These little shocks of nature; they are hints
To warn us of our end.
Horatia. How are you, sir?
Hor. Better, much better. My frail body could not
Support the swelling tumult of my soul.
Horatia. No accident, I hope, alarmed you, sir!
My brothers——
Hor. Here, go to the field again,
You, Cautus and Vindicius, and observe
Each circumstance. I shall be glad to hear
The manner of the fight.
Horatia. Are they engaged?
Hor. They are, Horatia. But first let me thank thee
For staying from the field. I would have seen
The fight myself; but this unlucky illness
Has forced me to retire. Where is thy friend?

Enter a Servant, who gives a paper to HORATIA, *and retires.*

What paper's that? Why dost thou tremble so?
Here, let me open it. [*Takes the paper, and opens it.*] From Curiatius!
Horatia. Oh, keep me not in this suspense, my father!
Relieve me from the rack.
Hor. He tells thee here,
He dare not do an action that would make him
Unworthy of thy love; and therefore——
Horatia. Dies!——
Well—I am satisfied.
Hor. I see by this
Thou hast endeavoured to persuade thy lover
To quit the combat. Couldst thou think, Horatia,
He'd sacrifice his country to a woman?
Horatia. I know not what I thought. He proves too plainly,
Whate'er it was, I was deceived in him
Whom I applied to.
Hor. Do not think so, daughter;
Could he, with honour, have declined the fight,

I should myself have joined in thy request,
And forced him from the field. But think, my child,
Had he consented, and had Alba's cause,
Supported by another arm, been baffled,
What then couldst thou expect? Would he not curse
His foolish love, and hate thee for thy fondness?
Nay, think, perhaps, 'twas artifice in thee
To aggrandize thy race, and lift their fame
Triumphant o'er his ruin and his country's?
Think well on that, and reason must convince thee.

Horatia. [*Wildly.*] Alas! had reason ever yet the power
To talk down grief, or bid the tortured wretch
Not feel his anguish? 'Tis impossible.
Could reason govern, I should now rejoice
They were engaged, and count the tedious moments
Till conquest smiled, and Rome again were free.
Could reason govern, I should beg of Heaven
To guide my brother's sword, and plunge it deep
Even in the bosom of the man I love:
I should forget he ever won my soul,
Forget 'twas your command that bade me love him,
Nay, fly, perhaps, to yon detested field,
And spurn with scorn his mangled body from me.

Hor. Why wilt thou talk thus? Pry'thee be more calm.
I can forgive thy tears; they flow from nature;
And could have gladly wished the Alban state
Had found us other enemies to vanquish.
But heaven has willed it, and heaven's will be done!
The glorious expectation of success
Buoys up my soul, nor lets a thought intrude
To dash my promised joys! What steady valour
Beams from their eyes! Just so, if fancy's power
May form conjecture from his after-age,
Rome's founder must have looked, when, warm in youth,
And flushed with future conquest, forth he marched
Against proud Acron, with whose bleeding spoils
He graced the altar of Feretrian Jove.——
Methinks I feel recovered: I might venture
Forth to the field again.—What ho! Volscinius!
Attend me to the camp.

Horatia. My dearest father,
Let me entreat your stay; the tumult there
Will discompose you, and a quick relapse
May prove most dangerous. I'll restrain my tears,
If they offend you,

Hor. Well, I'll be advised.
'Twere now too late; ere this they must have conquered;
And here's the happy messenger of glory!

Enter VALERIA.

Valeria. All's lost! All's ruined! Freedom is no more!

Hor. What dost thou say?

Valeria. That Rome's subdued by Alba.

Hor. It cannot be. Where are my sons? All dead?

Valeria. Publius is still alive—the other two
Have paid the fatal debt they owed their country.

Hor. Publius alive! You must mistake, Valeria;
He knows his duty better.
He must be dead, or Rome victorious.

Valeria. Thousands as well as I beheld the combat.
After his brothers' death he stood alone,
And acted wonders against three assailants;
Till forced, at last, to save himself by flight——

Hor. By flight! And did the soldiers let him pass?
Oh, I am ill again! The coward villain!
[*Throwing himself into his chair.*

Horatia. Alas, my brothers?

Hor. Weep not for them, girl.
They've died a death which kings themselves might envy,
And whilst they lived, they saw their country free.
Oh, had I perished with them! But for him,
Whose impious flight dishonours all his race,
Tears a fond father's heart, and tamely barters,
For poor precarious life, his country's glory—
Weep, weep for him, and let me join my tears!

Valeria. What could he do, my lord, when three opposed him?

Hor. Die!
He might have died.—Oh, villain! villain! villain!
And he shall die! this arm shall sacrifice
The life he dared preserve with infamy.
[*Endeavouring to rise.*
What means this weakness? 'Tis untimely now,
When I should punish an ungrateful boy.
Was this his boasted virtue, which could charm
His cheated sovereign, and brought tears of joy
To my old eyes! So young a hypocrite!
Oh, shame, shame, shame!

Valeria. Have patience, sir; all Rome
Beheld his valour, and approved his flight,
Against such opposition.

Hor. Tell not me!
What's Rome to me? Rome may excuse her traitor;
But I'm the guardian of my house's honour,
And I will punish. Pray ye, lead me forth:
I would have air.—But grant me strength, kind gods,
To do this act of justice, and I'll own,
Whate'er 'gainst Rome your awful wills decree,
You still are just and merciful to me. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Horatius's House.*

Enter HORATIUS, VALERIA *following.*

Hor. Away, away! I feel my strength renewed,
And I will hunt the villain through the world:
No desarts shall conceal, nor darkness hide him.
He is well skilled in flight; but he shall find
'Tis not so easy to elude the vengeance
Of a wronged father's arm, as to escape
His adversary's sword.
Valeria. Restrain your rage
But for a moment, sir. When you shall hear
The whole unravelled, you will find he is innocent.
Hor. It cannot be.
Valeria. And see, my brother comes.
He may perhaps relate—
Hor. I will not hear him;
I will not listen to my shame again.

Enter VALERIUS.

Val. I come with kind condolence from the king
To soothe a father's grief, and to express——
Hor. I've heard it all; I pray you spare my blushes.
I want not consolation: 'tis enough
They perished for their country. But the third—
Val. True, he indeed may well supply your loss,
And calls for all your fondness.
Hor. All my vengeance:
And he shall have it, sir.
Val. What means my lord?
Are you alone displeased for what he has done?
Hor. 'Tis I alone, I find, must punish it.
Val. Vengeance!
Punish, my lord! What fault has he committed?
Hor. Why will you double my confusion thus?
Is flight no fault?
Val. In such a case as his
'Twas glorious.
Hor. Glorious! Oh, rare sophistry,
To find a way through infamy to glory!
Val. I scarce can trust my senses—Infamy!
What, was it infamous to save his country?
Is art a crime? Is it the name of flight
We can't forgive, though its adored effect
Restored us all to freedom, fame, and empire?
Hor. What fame, what freedom? Who has saved his country?
Val. Your son, my lord, has done it.
Hor. How, when, where?
Val. Is't possible? Did not you say you knew?
Hor. I care not what I knew—Oh, tell me all!
Is Rome still free? Has Alba—Has my son—
Tell me—
Val. Your son, my lord, has slain her champions.
Hor. What, Publius?
Val. Ay, Publius.
Hor. Oh, let me clasp thee to me!
Were there not three remaining?
Val. True, there were;
But wounded all.
Hor. Your sister here had told us
That Rome was vanquished, that my son was fled—
Val. And he did fly: but 'twas that flight preserved us.
All Rome, as well as she, has been deceived.
Hor. Let me again embrace thee—Come, relate it.
Did I not say, Valeria, that my boy
Must needs be dead, or Rome victorious?
I long to hear the manner—Well, Valerius—
Val. Your other sons, my lord, had paid the debt
They owed to Rome, and he alone remained
'Gainst three opponents, whose united strength,
Though wounded each, and robbed of half their force,
Was still too great for his. Awhile he stood
Their fierce assaults, and then pretended flight,
Only to tire his wounded adversaries.
Hor. Pretended flight, and thus succeeded, ha!
Oh, glorious boy!
Val. 'Twas better still, my lord:
For all pursued, but not with equal speed.
Each, eager for the conquest, pressed to reach him;
Nor did the first, till 'twas too late, perceive
His fainter brothers panting far behind.
Hor. He took them singly, then? An easy conquest;
'Twas boy's play only!
Val. Never did I see
Such universal joy, as when the last
Sunk on the ground beneath Horatius' sword;
Who seemed a while to parley as a friend,
And would have given him life, but Caius scorned it.
Valeria. Caius! Oh, poor Horatia!
Hor. Peace, I charge thee.
Go, dress thy face in smiles, and bid thy friend
Wake to new transports. Let ambition fire her.
What is a lover lost? There's not a youth
In Rome but will adore her. Kings will seek
For her alliance now, and mightiest chiefs
Be honoured by her smiles. Will they not, youth? [*Exit* VAL.
Val. Most sure, my lord, this day has added worth
To her, whose merit was before unequalled.
Hor. How could I doubt his virtue!—Mighty gods!
This is true glory, to preserve his country,

And bid, by one brave act, the Horatian name
In fame's eternal volumes be enrolled.
Methinks already I behold his triumph!
Rome gazes on him like a second founder;
The wondering eye of childhood views with awe
The new divinity; and trembling age
Crowds eager on to bless him ere it dies!
Ere long, perhaps, they will raise altars to him,
And even with hymns and sacrifice adore
The virtue I suspected!—Gracious Heaven!
Where is he? Let me fly, and at his feet
Forget the father, and implore a pardon
For such injustice.

Val. You may soon, my lord,
In his embraces lose the fond remembrance
Of your mistaken rage. The king, ere this,
Has from the field dispatched him; he but staid
Till he could send him home with some slight honours
Of scattered wreaths, and grateful songs of praise;
For till to-morrow he postpones the pomp
Of solemn thanks, and sacrifice to Heaven
For liberty restored. But hark! that shout,
Which sounds from far, and seems the mingled voice
Of thousands, speaks him onward on his way.

Hor. How my heart dances!—Yet I blush to meet him.
But I will on. Come, come, Horatia; leave
[*Calling at the door.*
Thy sorrow far behind, and let us fly
With open arms to greet our common glory.
[*Exit.*

Enter HORATIA *and* VALERIA.

Horatia. Yes, I will go; this father's hard command
Shall be obeyed; and I will meet the conqueror,
But not in smiles.

Val. Oh, go not, gentle lady!
Might I advise——

Valeria. Your griefs are yet too fresh,
And may offend him. Do not, my Horatia.

Val. Indeed 'twere better to avoid his presence;
It will revive your sorrows, and recall—

Horatia. Sir, when I saw you last, I was a woman,
The fool of nature, a fond prey to grief,
Made up of sighs and tears. But now my soul
Disdains the very thought of what I was;
'Tis grown too callous to be moved with toys.
Observe me well; am I not nobly changed?
Stream my sad eyes, or heaves my breast one groan?
No: for I doubt no longer. 'Tis not grief,
'Tis resolution now, and fixed despair.

Valeria. My dear Horatia, you strike terrors through me;
What dreadful purpose hast thou formed? Oh, speak!

Val. Talk gently to her.—Hear me yet, sweet lady!
You must not go; whatever you resolve,
There is a sight will pierce you to the soul.

Horatia. What sight?

Val. Alas, I should be glad to hide it;
But it is—

Horatia. What?

Val. Your brother wears in triumph
The very scarf I bore to Curiatius.

Horatia. [*Wildly.*] Ye gods, I thank ye! 'tis with joy I hear it.
If I should faulter now, that sight would rouse
My drooping rage, and swell the tempest louder
——But soft; they may prevent me; wild passion
Betrays my purpose.—I'll dissemble with them.
[*She sits down.*

Val. She softens now.

Valeria. How do you, my Horatia?

Horatia. Alas, my friend, 'tis madness which I utter——
Since you persuade me then, I will not go.
But leave me to myself; I would sit here;
Alone in silent sadness pour my tears,
And meditate on my unheard-of woes.

Val. [*To* VALERIA.] 'Twere well to humour this. But may she not,
If left alone, do outrage on herself?

Valeria. I have prevented that; she has not near her
One instrument of death.

Val. Retire we then;
But, oh, not far! for now I feel my soul
Still more perplexed with love. Who knows, Valeria,
But when this storm of grief has blown its fill,
She may grow calm, and listen to my vows?
[*Exeunt* VALERIUS *and* VALERIA.

After a short silence, HORATIA *rises and comes forward.*

Horatia. Yes, they are gone; and now be firm, my soul!
This way I can elude their search. The heart,
Which doats like mine, must break to be at ease.
Just now I thought, had Curiatius lived,
I could have driven him from my breast for ever.
But death has cancelled all my wrongs at once.
——They were not wrongs; 'twas virtue which undid us:
And virtue shall unite us in the grave.
I heard them say, as they departed hence,
That they had robbed me of all means of death.
Vain thought! they knew not half Horatia's purpose.
Be resolute, my brother; let no weak,
Unmanly fondness mingle with thy virtue,
And I will touch thee nearly. Oh, come on!
'Tis thou alone canst give Horatia peace. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Street of Rome.*

Chorus of Youths and Virgins singing, and scattering branches of oak, flowers, &c. Then enters HORATIUS, *leaning on the arm of* PUBLIUS HORATIUS.

Chorus. *Thus, for freedom nobly won,*
Rome her hasty tribute pours;
And on one victorious son
Half exhausts her blooming stores.

A Youth. *Scatter here the laurel crown,*
Emblem of immortal praise!
Wondrous youth! to thy renown
Future times shall altars raise.

A Virgin. *Scatter here the myrtle wreath,*
Though the bloodless victor's due;
Grateful thousands saved from death
Shall devote that wreath to you.

A Youth. *Scatter here the oaken bough;*
Even for one averted fate,
We that civic meed bestow—
He saved all who saved the state.

Chorus. *Thus, for freedom, &c.*

Hor. Thou dost forgive me then, my dearest boy?
I cannot tell thee half my ecstasy.
The day which gave thee first to my glad hopes
Was misery to this——I'm mad with transport!
Why are ye silent there? Again renew
Your songs of praise, and in a louder strain
Pour forth your joy, and tell the listening spheres,
That Rome is freed by my Horatius' hand!
Pub. No more, my friends.——You must permit me, sir,
To contradict you here. Not but my soul,
Like yours, is open to the charms of praise:
There is no joy beyond it, when the mind
Of him, who hears it, can with honest pride
Confess it just, and listen to its music.
But now the toils I have sustained require
Their interval of rest, and every sense
Is deaf to pleasure—Let me leave you, friends;
We're near our home, and would be private now:
To-morrow we'll expect your kind attendance,
To share our joys, and waft our thanks to heaven.

As they are going off, HORATIA *rushes in.*

Horatia. Where is this mighty chief?
Hor. My daughter's voice!
I bade her come; she has forgot her sorrows,
And is again my child.
Horatia. Is this the hero
That tramples nature's ties, and nobly soars
Above the dictates of humanity?
Let me observe him well.
Pub. What means my sister?
Horatia. Thy sister! I disclaim the impious title;
Base and inhuman! Give me back my husband,
My life, my soul, my murdered Curiatius!
Pub. He perished for his country.
Horatia. Gracious gods!
Was't not enough that thou hadst murdered him,
But thou must triumph in thy guilt, and wear
His bleeding spoils?—Oh, let me tear them from thee,
Drink the dear drops that issued from his wounds,
More dear to me than the whole tide that swells
With impious pride a hostile brother's heart!
Hor. Am I awake, or is it all illusion!
Was it for this thou cam'st!
Pub. Horatia, hear me;
Yet I am calm, and can forgive thy folly;
Would I could call it by no harsher name!
But do not tempt me farther. Go, my sister,
Go hide thee from the world, nor let a Roman
Know with what insolence thou dar'st avow
Thy infamy, or, what is more my shame,
How tamely I forgave it. Go, Horatia.
Horatia. I will not go. What, have I touched thee, then?
And canst thou feel? Oh, think not thou shalt lose
Thy share of anguish! I'll pursue thee still,
Urge thee all day with thy unnatural crimes,
Tear, harrow up thy breast; and then at night
I'll be the fury that shall haunt thy dreams,
Wake thee with shrieks, and place before thy sight
Thy mangled friends in all their pomp of horror.
Pub. Away with her! 'tis womanish complaining.
Think'st thou such trifles can alarm the man,
Whose noblest passion is his country's love?
—Let it be thine, and learn to bear affliction.
Horatia. Curse on my country's love! the trick ye teach us
To make us slaves beneath the mask of virtue;
To rob us of each soft endearing sense,
And violate the first great law within us.
I scorn the impious passion.
Pub. Have a care;
Thou'st touched a string which may awake my vengeance.
Horatia. [*Aside.*] Then it shall do it.
Pub. Oh, if thou dar'st prophane

That sacred tie which winds about my heart,
By Heaven I swear, by the great gods who rule
The fate of empires, 'tis not this fond weakness
Which hangs upon me, and retards my justice,
Nor even thy sex, which shall protect thee from me. [*Clapping his hand on his sword.*
Hor. Drag her away—thou'lt make me curse thee, girl——
Indeed she's mad. [*To* PUBLIUS.
Horatia. Stand off, I am not mad——
Nay, draw thy sword; I do defy thee, murderer,
Barbarian, Roman!—Mad! The name of Rome
Makes madmen of you all; my curses on it!
I do detest its impious policy.
Rise, rise, ye states! (oh, that my voice could fire
Your tardy wrath!) confound its selfish greatness,
Raze its proud walls, and lay its towers in ashes!
Pub. I'll bear no more——
[*Drawing his sword.*
Hor. Distraction!—Force her off—
Horatia. [*Struggling.*] Could I but prove the Helen to destroy
This cursed unsocial state, I'd die with transport;
Gaze on the spreading fires—till the last pile
Sunk in the blaze—then mingle with its ruins.
Pub. Thou shalt not live to that.
[*Exit after her.*
Thus perish all the enemies of Rome! [*Without.*

Re-enter VALERIUS.

Val. Oh, horror! horror! execrable act!
If there be law in Rome; if there be justice,
By Rome, and all its gods, thou shalt not 'scape.
[*Exit.*

Re-enter PUBLIUS, *followed by* HORATIA, *wounded.*

Horatia. Now, thou'st indeed been kind, and I forgive you
The death of Curiatius; this last blow
Has cancelled all, and thou'rt again my brother.
Hor. Heavens! what a sight!
A daughter bleeding by a brother's hand!
My child! my child!
Horatia. What means this tenderness? I thought to see you
Inflamed with rage against a worthless wretch,
Who has dishonoured your illustrious race,
And stained its brightest fame: in pity look not
Thus kindly on me, for I have injured you.
Hor. Thou hast not, girl;
I said 'twas madness, but he would not hear me.
Horatia. Oh, wrong him not! his act was noble justice;
I forced him to the deed; for know, my father,
It was not madness, but the firm result
Of settled reason, and deliberate thought.
I was resolved on death, and witness, Heaven,
I'd not have died by any hand but his,
For the whole round of fame his worth shall boast
Through future ages.
Hor. What hast thou said? Wert thou so bent on death?
Was all thy rage dissembled?
Horatia. Alas! my father!
All but my love was false; what that inspired
I uttered freely.
But for the rest, the curses which I poured
On heaven-defended Rome, were merely lures
To tempt his rage, and perfect my destruction.
Heaven! with what transport I beheld him moved!
How my heart leaped to meet the welcome point,
Stained with the life-blood of my Curiatius!
Cementing thus our union even in death.
Pub. My sister, live! I charge thee live, Horatia!
Oh, thou hast planted daggers here.
Horatia. My brother!
Can you forgive me too? then I am happy.
I dared not hope for that. Ye gentle ghosts,
That rove Elysium, hear the sacred sound!
My father and my brother both forgive me!
I have again their sanction on my love.
Oh, let me hasten to those happier climes,
Where, unmolested, we shall share our joys,
Nor Rome, nor Alba, shall disturb us more.
[*Dies.*
Hor. 'Tis gone, the prop, the comfort of my age!
Let me reflect; this morn I had four children,
No happier father hailed the sun's uprising:
Now, I have none, for, Publius, thou must die:
Blood calls for blood—to expiate one parricide,
Justice demands another—Art thou ready?
Pub. Strike! 'tis the consummation of my wishes
To die, and by your hand.
Hor. Oh, blind old man!
Wouldst thou lift up thy sacrilegious hand
Against the chief, the god, that saved thy country?
There's something in that face that awes my soul,
Like a divinity. Hence, thou vile weapon,
Disgrace my hand no more.
[*A cry without.* Justice! Justice!]
What noise is that?

Enter VOLSCINIUS.

Vols. All Rome, my lord, has taken the alarm, and crowds
Of citizens, enraged, are posting hither,
To call for justice on the head of Publius.
Hor. Ungrateful men! how dare they? Let them come.

Enter TULLUS, VALERIUS, *and Citizens.*

Val. See, fellow-citizens, see where she lies,
The bleeding victim.
Tul. Stop, unmannered youth!
Think'st thou we know not wherefore we are here?
Seest thou yon drooping sire?
Hor. Permit them, sir.
Tul. What would you, Romans?
Val. We are come, dread sir,
In the behalf of murdered innocence;
Murdered by him, the man—

Hor. Whose conquering arm
Has saved you all from ruin. Oh, shame! shame!
Has Rome no gratitude? Do ye not blush
To think whom your insatiate rage pursues?
Down, down, and worship him.
1 *Citizen.* Does he plead for him?
2 *Citizen.* Does he forgive his daughter's death?
Hor. He does,
And glories in it; glories in the thought,
That there's one Roman left who dares be grateful.
If you are wronged, then what am I? Must I
Be taught my duty by the affected tears
Of strangers to my blood? Had I been wronged,
I know a father's right, and had not asked
This ready-talking sir to bellow for me,
And mouth my wrongs in Rome.
Val. Friends, countrymen, regard not what he says;
Stop, stop your ears, nor hear a frantic father
Thus plead against his child.
Hor. He does belie me.
What child have I? Alas, I have but one!
And him you would tear from me.
All Citizens. Hear him! hear him!
Pub. No; let me speak. Think'st thou, ungrateful youth,
To hurt my quiet? I am hurt beyond
Thy power to harm me. Death's extremest tortures
Were happiness to what I feel. Yet know,
My injured honour bids me live; nay, more,
It bids me even descend to plead for life.
But wherefore waste I words? 'Tis not to him,
But you, my countrymen, to you, I speak;
He loved the maid.
1 *Citizen.* How! loved her!
Pub. Fondly loved her;
And, under shew of public justice, screens
A private passion, and a mean revenge.
Think you, I loved her not? High Heaven's my witness
How tenderly I loved her; and the pangs
I feel this moment, could you see my heart,
Would prove too plainly I am still her brother.
1 *Citizen.* He shall be saved.
Valerius has misled us.
All Citizens. Save him! save him!
Tul. If yet a doubt remains,
Behold that virtuous father, who could boast,
This very morn, a numerous progeny,
The dear supports of his declining age;
Then read the sad reverse with pitying eyes,
And tell your conscious hearts they fell for you.
Hor. I am overpaid by that, nor claim I aught
On their accounts; by high Heaven, I swear,
I'd rather see him added to the heap,
Than Rome enslaved.
1 *Citizen.* Oh, excellent Horatius!
All Citizens. Save him! save him!
Tul. Then I pronounce him free.—And now, Horatius,
The evening of thy stormy day at last
Shall close in peace. Here, take him to thy breast!
Hor. My son, my conqueror! 'twas a fatal stroke,
But shall not wound our peace. This kind embrace
Shall spread a sweet oblivion o'er our sorrows;
Or if, in after times, though 'tis not long
That I shall trouble you, some sad remembrance
Should steal a sigh, and peevish age forget
Its resolution, only boldly say,
Thou sav'dst the state, and I'll intreat forgiveness.
Learn hence, ye Romans, on how sure a base
The patriot builds his happiness;
Grief may to grief in endless round succeed,
And nature suffer when our children bleed;
But still superior must that hero prove,
Whose first, best passion, is his country's love.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

LADIES, by me our courteous author sends
His compliments to all his female friends,
And thanks them from his soul for every bright
Indulgent tear which they have shed to-night.
Sorrow in virtue's cause proclaims a mind,
And gives to beauty graces more refin'd.
Ah, who could bear the loveliest form of art,
A cherub's face, without a feeling heart!
'Tis there alone, whatever charms we boast,
Though men may flatter and though men may toast,
'Tis there alone they find the joy sincere,
The wife, the parent, and the friend are there.
All else, the veriest rakes themselves must own,
Are but the paltry play-things of the town;
The painted clouds, which, glittering, tempt the chace,
Then melt in air, and mock the vain embrace.
Well then, the private virtues, 'tis confest,
Are the soft inmates of the feeling breast.
But then, they fill so full that crowded space,
That the poor public seldom finds a place.
And I suspect there's many a fair one here,

Who pour'd her sorrows on Horatia's bier,
That still retains so much of flesh and blood,
She'd fairly hang her brother, if she could.
Why, ladies, to be sure, if that be all,
At your tribunal he must stand or fall.
Whate'er his country, or his sire decreed,
You are his judges now, and he must plead,
Like other culprit youths, he wanted grace;
But could have no self-interest in the case.
Had she been wife, or mistress, or a friend,
It might have answer'd some convenient end:
But a mere sister, whom he lov'd—to take
Her life away,—and for his country's sake!
Faith, ladies, you may pardon him; indeed
There's very little fear the crime should spread.
True patriots are but rare among the men,
And really might be useful now and then.
Then do not check, by your disapprobation,
A spirit which might rule the British nation,
And still might rule—would you but set the fashion.

ELFRIDA,

A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY

MASON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ORGAR, *Earl of Devonshire.*
CHORUS, *of British Virgins.*
ELFRIDA, *daughter to Orgar.*
ATHELWOLD, *husband to Elfrida.*
EDWIN, *a messenger.*
EDGAR, *King of England.*

SCENE,—*A Lawn before Athelwold's Castle in Harewood Forest.*

Org. How nobly does this venerable wood,
Gilt with the glories of the orient sun,
Embosom yon fair mansion! The soft air
Salutes me with most cool and temp'rate breath;
And, as I tread the flow'r-besprinkled lawn,
Sends up a gale of fragrance. I should guess,
If e'er Content deign'd visit mortal clime,
This was her place of dearest residence.
Grant, Heav'n, I find it such! 'Tis now three months,
Since first earl Athelwold espous'd my daughter.
He then besought me, for some little space,
The nuptials might be secret: many reasons,
He said, induc'd to this: I made no pause,
But, resting on his prudence, to his will
Gave absolute concurrence. Soon as married,
He to this secret seat convey'd Elfrida;
Convey'd her as by stealth, enjoy'd, and left her:
Yet not without I know not what excuse
Of call to court, of Edgar's royal friendship,
And England's welfare. To his prince he went:
And since, as by intelligence I gather,
He oft returns to this his cloister'd wife;
But ever with a privacy most studied,
Borrowing disguises till inventive art
Can scarce supply him with variety.
His visits, as they're stol'n, are also short;
Seldom beyond the circuit of one sun;
Then back to court, while she his absence mourns
Full many a lonely hour. I brook not this.
Had Athelwold espous'd some base-born peasant,
This usage had been apt; but when he took
My daughter to his arms, he took a virgin,
Through whose rich veins the blood of British kings
Ran in unsullied stream. Her lineage sure
Might give her place and notice with the noblest
In Edgar's court. Elfrida's beauty too
(I speak not from a father's foolish fondness)
Would shine amid the fairest, and reflect
No vulgar glory on that beauty's master.
This act bespeaks the madman. Who that own'd
An em'rald, jasper, or chrysolite,
Would hide its lustre, or not bid it blaze
Conspicuous on his brow? Haply Athelwold
May have espous'd some other. 'Sdeath, he durst not!
My former feats in arms must have inform'd him,
That Orgar, while he liv'd, would never prove
A traitor to his honour. If he has—
This aged arm is not so much unstrung
By slack'ning years, but just revenge will brace it.
And, by yon awful heav'n—But hold, my rage!
I came to search into this matter coolly.
Hence, to conceal the father and the earl,
This pilgrim's staff, and scrip, and all these marks
Of vagrant poverty.

Cho. [*within.*] Hail to thy living light, ambrosial morn!
All hail thy roscat ray!
Org. But hark, the sound of sweetest minstrelsy
Breaks on mine ear. The females, I suppose,
Whom Athelwold has left my child's attendants;
That, when she wails the absence of her lord,
Their lenient airs, and sprightly-fancied songs,
May steal away her woes. See, they approach:
This grove shall shroud me till they cease their strain;
Then I'll address them with some feigned tale.
[*He retires.*

ODE.

Cho. Hail to thy living light,
Ambrosial morn! all hail thy roseat ray:
That bids young Nature all her charms display
In varied beauty bright;
That bids each dewy-spangled flowret rise,
And dart around its vermeil dies;
Bids silver lustre grace yon sparkling tide,
That winding warbles down the mountain's side.
Away, ye goblins all,
Wont the bewilder'd traveller to daunt;
Whose vagrant feet have trac'd your secret haunt
Beside some lonely wall,
Or shatter'd ruin of a moss-grown tow'r,
Where at pale midnight's stillest hour,
Through each rough chink the solemn orb of night
Pours momentary gleams of trembling light.
Away, ye elves, away:
Shrink at ambrosial morning's living ray;
That living ray, whose pow'r benign
Unfolds the scene of glory to our eye,
Where, thron'd in artless majesty,
The cherub Beauty sits on nature's rustic shrine.—

CHORUS, ORGAR.

Cho. Silence, my sisters.—Whence this rudeness, stranger,
That thus has prompted thine unbidden ear
To listen to our strains?
Org. Your pardon, virgins:
I meant not rudeness, though I dar'd to listen;
For ah! what ear so fortify'd and barr'd
Against the force of powerful harmony,
But would with transport to such sweet assailants
Surrender its attention? Never yet
Have I pass'd by the night-bird's fav'rite spray,
What time she pours her wild and artless song,
Without attentive pause and silent rapture;
How could I then, with savage disregard,
Hear voices tun'd by nature sweet as her's,
Grac'd with all art's addition?
Cho. Thy mean garb,
And this thy courtly phrase but ill accord.
Whence, and what art thou, stranger?
Org. Virgins, know
These limbs have oft been wrapt in richer vest:
But what avails it now? all have their fate;
And mine has been most wretched.
Cho. May we ask
What cruel cause—
Org. No! let this hapless breast
Still hide the melancholy tale.
Cho. We know,
There oft is found an avarice in grief;
And the wan eye of Sorrow loves to gaze
Upon its secret hoard of treasur'd woes
In pining solitude. Perhaps thy mind
Takes the same pensive cast: if not, permit
That we, in social sympathy, may drop
The tender tear.
Org. Ah! ill would it become ye,
To let the woes of such a wretch as I am,
E'er dim your bright eyes with a pitying tear.
Cho. The eye, that will not weep another's sorrow,
Should boast no gentler brightness than the glare,
That reddens in the eye-ball of the wolf.
Let us intreat—
Org. Know, virgins, I was born
To ample property of lands and flocks,
On this side Tweeda's stream. My youth and vigour
Atchiev'd full many a feat of martial prowess:
Nor was my skill in chivalry unnoted
In the fair volume of my sov'reign's love;
Who ever held me in his best esteem,
And closest to his person. When he paid,
What all must pay, to fate; and short-liv'd Edwy
Mounted the vacant throne, which now his brother
Fills (as loud fame reports) right royally;
I then, unfit for pageantry and courts,
Sat down in peace among my faithful vassals,
At my paternal seat. But ah! not long
Had I enjoy'd the sweets of that recess,
Ere, by the savage inroads of base hinds,
That sallied frequent from the Scottish heights,
My lands were all laid waste, my people murder'd;
And I, through impotence of age, unfit
To quell their brutal rage, was forc'd to drag
My mis'ries through the land, a friendless wand'rer.
Cho. We pity and condole thy wretched state,
But we can do no more; which, on thy part,
Claims just returns of pity: for whose lot
Demands it more than theirs, whom fate forbids
To taste the joys of courteous charity;
To wipe the trickling tears, which dew the cheek
Of palsy'd age; to smooth its furrow'd brow,
And pay its grey hairs each due reverence?
Yet such delight we are forbid to taste!
For 'tis our lord's command, that not a stranger,
However high or lowly his degree,
Have entrance at these gates.
Org. Who may this tyrant—
Cho. Alas, no tyrant he; the more our wonder
At this harsh mandate: Tenderness and pity
Have made his breast their home. He is a man
More apt, through inborn gentleness, to err
In giving mercy's tide too free a course,
Than with a thrifty and illiberal hand

To stint its channel. This his praise you'll hear
The universal theme in Edgar's court:
For Edgar ranks him first in his high favour;
Loads him with honours, which the earl receives,
As does the golden censer frankincense,
Only to spread a sacred gale of blessings
Around on all.
Org. Methinks, this pleasing portrait
Bears strong resemblance of Lord Athelwold.
Cho. Himself: no Briton but has heard his fame.
Org. 'Tis wondrous strange; can you conceive no cause
For this his conduct?
Cho. None, that we may trust.
Org. Your garbs bespeak you for the fair attendants
Of some illustrious dame, the wife or sister
Of this dread earl.
Cho. On this head too, old man,
We are commanded a religious silence:
Which strictly we obey; for well we know
Fidelity's a virtue that ennobles
Even servitude itself: farewell, depart
With our best wishes; we do trespass much
To hold this open converse with a stranger.
Org. Stay, virgins, stay; have ye no friendly shed,
But bordering on your castle, where these limbs
Might lay their load of misery for an hour?
Have ye no food, however mean and homely,
Wherewith I might support declining nature?
Even while I speak, I find my spirits fail;
And well, full well, I know, these trembling feet,
Ere I can pace a hundred steps, will sink
Beneath their wretched burthen.
Cho. Piteous sight!
What shall we do, my sisters? To admit
This man beneath the roof, would be to scorn
The earl's strict interdict; and yet my heart
Bleeds to behold that white, old, reverend head
Bow'd with such misery.—Yes, we must aid him.
Hie thee, poor pilgrim, to yon neighb'ring bow'r,
O'er which an old oak spreads his awful arm,
Mantled in brownest foliage, and beneath
The ivy, gadding from the untwisted stem,
Curtains each verdant side. There thou may'st rest,
There too, perchance, some of our sisterhood
May bring thee speedy sustenance.
Org. Kind Heaven!
Reward——
Cho. Ah, stay not here to thank us,
But haste to give thine age this meet repose.
That done, we do conjure thee leave the place
With cautious secrecy; for was it known,
That thus we trespass'd on our lord's command,
The consequence were fatal.
Org. Fairest maid!
Think not I'll basely draw down punishments
On my preservers. I retire. May blessings
Shower'd from yon fount of bliss repay your kindness. [*Exit* ORG.
Semicho. Yes, sisters, yes, when pale distress
Implores your aiding hand,
Let not a partial faithfulness,
Let not a mortal's vain command
Urge you to break the unalterable laws
Of heaven-descended Charity.
Ah! follow still the soft-ey'd Deity;
For know, each path she draws,
Along the plain of life,
Meets at the central dome of heartfelt joy.
Follow the soft-ey'd Deity;
She bids ye, as ye hope for blessings, bless.
Aid then the general cause of general happiness.
Semicho. Humanity, thy awful strain
Shall ever greet our ear,
Sonorous, sweet, and clear.
And as amid the sprightly-swelling train
Of dulcet notes, that breathe
From flute or lyre,
The deep base rolls its manly melody,
Guiding the tuneful choir;
So thou, Humanity, shalt lead along
The accordant passions in their moral song,
And give our mental concert truest harmony.
Cho. But see, Elfrida comes.
Should we again resume our former strain,
And hail the morn that paints her waking beauties;
Or stay her gentle bidding? Rather stay;
For, as I think, she seems in pensive mood:
And there are times, when, to the sorrowing soul,
Even harmony is harshness.

ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

Elf. O my virgins,
With what a leaden and retarding weight,
Does expectation load the wing of Time?
Alas, how have these three dull hours crept on,
Since first the crimson mantle of the morn
Skirted yon gay horizon? Say, my friends,
Have I miscounted? Did not Athelwold
At parting fix this morn for his return?
This dear long-wish'd-for morn? He did, he did
And seal'd it with a kiss; I could not err.
And yet he comes not. He was wont outstrip
The sun's most early speed, and make its rising
To me unwish'd and needless. This delay
Creates strange doubts and scruples in my breast
Courts throng with beauties, and my Athelwold
Has a soft, susceptible heart, as prone
To yield its love to every sparkling eye,
As is the musk-rose to dispense its fragrance
To every whispering breeze; perhaps he's false
Perhaps Elfrida's wretched.
Cho. See, Elfrida,
Ah see! how round yon branching elm the ivy
Clasps its green folds, and poisons what supports it.
Not less injurious to the shoots of love
Is sickly jealousy.
Elf. My mind nor pines
With jealousy, nor rests secure in peace.
Who loves, must fear; and sure who loves like me

Must greatly fear.
Cho. Yet whence the cause? Your earl
Has ever yet (this little breach excepted)
Been punctual to appointment. Did his eye
Glow with less ardent passion when he left you,
Than at the first blest meeting? No! I marked him,
His parting glance was that of fervent love,
And constancy unalter'd. Do not fear him.
Elf. I should not fear him, were his present stay
The only cause. Alas, it is not so!
Why comes my earl so secret to these arms!
Why, but because he dreads the just reproach
Of some deluded fair one? Why am I
Here shrouded up, like the pale votarist,
Who knows no visitant, save the lone owl,
That nightly leaves his ivy-shrouded cell,
And sails on slow wing through the cloister'd isles,
Listening her saintly orisons? Why am I
Deny'd to follow my departed lord
Whene'er his duty calls him to the palace?
Cho. Covet not that; the noblest proof of love
That Athelwold can give, is still to guard
Your beauties from the blast of courtly gales.
The crimson blush of virgin modesty,
The delicate soft tints of innocence
There all fly off, and leave no boast behind,
But well-rang'd, faded features. Ah, Elfrida,
Should you be doom'd, which happier fate forbid!
To drag your hours through all that nauseous scene
Of pageantry and vice; your purer breast,
True to its virtuous relish, soon would heave
A fervent sigh for innocence and Harewood.
Elf. You much mistake me, virgins; the throng'd palace
Were undesired by me, did not that palace
Detain my Athelwold. If he were here,
His presence would convert this range of oaks
To stately columns; these gay-liv'ried flowers
To troops of gallant ladies: and yon deer,
That jut their antlers forth in sportive fray,
To armed knights at joust or tournament.
If Athelwold dwelt here, if no ambition
Could lure his steps from love, and this still forest;
If I might never moan his time of absence,
Longer than that which serv'd him for the chase,
Or of the wolf, or stag; or when he bore
The hood-wink'd falcon forth; might these, my virgins,
And these alone, be love's short intervals,
I should not have one thought remote from Harewood.
Cho. And would you wish that Athelwold should slight
The weal of England, and on these light toys
Waste his unvalued hours? No, fond Elfrida;
His active soul is wing'd for nobler flights.
Elf. What then, must England's welfare hold my earl
For ever from these shades?
Cho. We say not that.
The youth, who bathes in pleasure's tempting stream
At well-judg'd intervals, feels all his soul
Nerv'd with recruited strength; but if too oft
He swims in sportive mazes through the flood,
It chills his languid virtue. For this cause
Your earl forbids, that these enchanting groves,
And their fair mistress should possess him wholly.
He knows he has a country and a king,
That claim his first attention; yet be sure,
'Twill not be long, ere his unbending mind
Shall lose in sweet oblivion every care,
Among th' embow'ring shades that veil Elfrida.
Elf. O be that speech prophetic; may he soon
Seek these embowering shades! Meanwhile, my friends,
Sooth me with harmony. I know full well
That ye were nurs'd in Cornwall's wizard caves,
And oft have pac'd the fairy-peopled vales
Of Devon, where posterity retains
Some vein of that old minstrelsy, which breath'd
Through each time-honour'd grove of British oak.
There, where the spreading consecrated boughs
Fed the sage misletoe, the holy druids
Lay wrapt in moral musings; while the bards
Call'd from their solemn harps such lofty airs,
As drew down fancy from the realms of light
To paint some radiant vision on their minds,
Of high mysterious import. But on me
Such strains sublime were wasted: I but ask
A sprightly song to speed the lazy flight
Of these dull hours. And music sure can find
A magic spell to make them skim their round,
Swift as the swallow circles. Try its power:
While I, from yonder hillock, watch his coming.
[*Exit* ELFRIDA.

ODE.

Cho. The turtle tells her plaintive tale,
Sequester'd in some shadowy vale;
The lark in radiant æther floats,
And swells his wild extatic notes:
Meanwhile on yonder hawthorn spray
The linnet wakes her temp'rate lay;
She haunts no solitary shade,
She flutters o'er no sunshine mead,
No love-lorn griefs depress her song,
No raptures lift it loudly high,
But soft she trills, amid th' aerial throng,
Smooth simple strains of sob'rest harmony.

Sweet bird! like thine our lay shall flow
Nor gaily brisk, nor sadly slow;
For to thy note, sedate and clear,
Content still lends a list'ning ear.
Reclin'd this mossy bank along,
Oft has she heard thy careless song:
Why hears not now? What fairer grove
From Harewood lures her devious love?
What fairer grove than Harewood knows,
More woodland walks, more fragrant gales,
More shadowy bowers, inviting soft repose,
More streams slow wand'ring through her winding vales?

Perhaps to some lone cave the rover flies,
Where lull'd in pious peace the hermit lies.
For, from the hall's tumultuous state,
Where banners wave with blazon'd gold,
There will the meek-ey'd matron oft retreat,
And with the solemn sage high converse hold.

There, goddess, on the shaggy mound,
Where tumbling torrents roar around,
Where pendant mountains o'er your head
Stretch their reverential shade;
You listen, while the holy seer
Slowly chaunts his vespers clear;
Or of his sparing mess partake,
The sav'ry pulse, the wheaten cake,
The bev'rage cool of limpid rill.
Then, rising light, your host you bless,
And o'er his saintly temples bland distil
Seraphic day-dreams of heav'n's happiness.

Where'er thou art, enchanting power,
Thou soon wilt smile in Harewood's bower:
Soon will thy fairy feet be seen,
Printing this dew-impearled green;
Soon shall we mark thy gestures meek,
Thy glitt'ring eye, and dimpled cheek,
Among the welcome guests that move
Attendant on the state of love.
There, when the sov'reign leads along
Of sports and smiles a jocund train,
Then last, yet loveliest, of the lovely throng,
Thou com'st to soften, yet secure his reign.

And, hark, completing our prophetic lay,
The fleet hoof rattles o'er the flinty way;
Now nearer, and now nearer sounds.
Avaunt! ye vain, delusive fears.
Hark! Echo tells through Harewood's amplest bounds,
That love, content, and Athelwold appears.

ATHELWOLD, ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

Athel. Look ever thus; with that bright glance of joy
Thus alway meet my transports. Let these arms
Thus ever fold me; and this cheek, that blooms
With all health's op'ning roses, press my lips
Warm as at this blest moment.
Elf. Athelwold,
I had prepared me many a stern rebuke;
Had arm'd my brow with frowns, and taught my eye
Th' averted glance of coldness, which might best
Greet such a loit'ring lover: but I find,
'Twas a vain task; for this my truant heart
Forgets each lesson, which resentment taught,
And in thy sight knows only to be happy.
Athel. My best Elfrida—Heav'ns! it cannot last.
The giddy height of joy, to which I'm lifted,
Is as a hanging rock, at whose low foot
The black and beating surge of infamy
Rolls ready to receive, and sink my soul.
Elf. So soon to fall into this musing mood—
I thought, my lord, you promis'd you would leave
These looks behind at court. Nay, 'twas the cause
Assign'd for this my residence at Harewood,
That you might never come to these fond arms,
But with a breast devoid of public care,
And fill'd alone with rapture and Elfrida.
Said you not so? Why then that pensive posture,
That downcast eye? Surely the city's din,
And this calm grove have lost their difference.
I'll with you to the palace.
Athel. Heav'n forbid!
Elf. Nay, my best lord, I meant it but in sport;
For should you bid me quit these blooming lawns,
For some bare heath, or drear unpeopled desert;
Believe me, I would think its wildness Eden,
If Athelwold, with frequent visitation,
Endear'd the savage scene; but yet I fear
My father.
Athel. Ha! why him?
Elf. You know his temper;
How jealous of his rank, and his trac'd lineage
From royal ancestry. I fear me much,
He will not brook you should conceal me long
In this lone privacy: No, he will deem it
Far unbecoming her, whose veins are fill'd
With the rich stream of his nobility.
Should it be so, his hot and fiery nature,
I doubt, will blaze, and do some dreadful outrage.
Athel. He need not know it, or, if chance he should,
It matters not, if so this forest life
Seem of your own adoption and free choice.
And that it will so seem, I trust that love,
Which ever yet has met my wayward will
With pleas'd compliance, and unask'd assent.
Elf. And ever shall; yet blame me not, my lord,
If prying womanhood should prompt a wish
To learn the cause of this your strange commotion,
Which ever wakes, if I but drop one thought
Of quitting Harewood.
Athel. Go to the clear surface
Of yon unruffled lake, and, bending o'er it,
There read my answer.
Elf. These are riddles, sir—
Athel. No; for its glassy and reflecting surface
Will smile with charms too tempting for a palace.
Elf. Does Athelwold distrust Elfrida's faith?
Athel. No: but he much distrusts Elfrida's beauty.
Elf. Away: you trifle.
Athel. Never more in earnest;
I would not for the throne which Edgar sits on,
That Edgar should behold it.
Elf. What, my lord,
Think you the face, that caught your single heart,
Will make all hearts its captives? Vain surmise.
Yet grant it could; the face is your's alone:
Not Edgar's self would dare to seize it from you
Edgar's a king, and not a tyrant.
Athel. True,
Edgar's a king, a just one; his firm feet
Walk ever in the fore-right road of honour:

Nor do I know what lure can draw his steps
Devious from that straight path, save only one:
That tempting lure is beauty. Ah! Elfrida,
Throw but the dazz'ling bait within his view,
The untam'd wolf does not with fiercer rage
Burst the slight bondage of the silken net,
Than he the ties of law. Late, very late,
Smit casually with young Matilda's face,
He strait commanded her reluctant mother
To yield her to his arms: nor had she 'scaped
The violating fervour of his love,
Had not the prudent dame suborn'd her handmaid,
To take the unchaste office, and be led,
Veil'd in the mask of night, to Edgar's chamber,
A counterfeit Matilda. As it chanc'd,
The damsel pleas'd the king, nor did detection
A whit abate his fondness; he forgave
The prudent mother, eas'd Matilda's fears,
And led the wanton minstrel to his court,
Where still she shares—

Chor. Behold, earl Athelwold,
A messenger arrives; his speed and aspect
Speak some important errand.

EDWIN, ATHELWOLD, ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

Athel. How now, Edwin?

Edw. The king, my lord, is on his way to Harewood.

Athel. The king!

Edw. His purpose is to pass through Mercia;
And in a hasty message, some two hours
After you left the palace, this his pleasure
Was sent you by lord Scofrid; withal
Commanding your attendance. You being absent,
He straitway turn'd his course through this fair forest,
Meaning to chace the stag; his train is small,
As was his purpose sudden.

Elf. Good my lord,
Why thus perplex'd?

Cho. Heav'ns! what a deep despair
Sits on his brow?

Elf. The notice sure is short;
But that's a trifle, a small train requires
The smaller preparation: let him come.

Athel. Yes, let him come: so thou wilt say, Elfrida,
When thou hast heard my tale. Yes, let him come,
So wilt thou say, and let thy husband perish.
Yet shall these arms once more embrace thee closely,
Ere yet thou fly them as the pois'nous adder.
'Tis o'er: in that embrace Elfrida's love
Was buried; and in that embrace, the peace
Of wretched Athelwold.

Elf. What may this be!

Athel. O Edwin, Edwin, when surviving malice
Shall prey upon the fame of thy dead master,
Wilt thou not someway strive to check the fiend's insatiate fury? Wilt thou see my name
Defil'd, and blacken'd with detraction's venom,
And bear it patiently!

Elf. What means my best—

Athel. Peace; not a word of best, or lov'd, or dear:
These are not titles now for thee to use,
Or me to triumph in. Virgins, retire;
We would a while be private. Nay, return.
Concealment would be vain; and ye and Edwin
Are bound to me. Albina! as for you,
I saw'd your father, when his blood was forfeit.

Cho. Not I, great earl, alone, but all this train
Are bound by ev'ry tie of faith and love
To gen'rous Athelwold; to that mild master,
Who never forc'd our service to one act,
But of such liberal sort, as freedom's self
Would smilingly perform.

Athel. It may be so;
But where's the tie, Elfrida, that may bind
Thy faith and love?

Elf. The strongest sure, my lord,
The golden, nuptial tie. Try but its strength.

Athel. I must perforce this instant. Know, Elfrida,
Once, on a day of high festivity,
The youthful king, encircled with his nobles,
Crown'd high the sparkling bowl; and much of love,
Of beauty much the sprightly converse ran.
When, as it well might chance, the brisk lord Ardulph
Made gallant note of Orgar's peerless daughter,
And in such phrase as might inflame a breast
More cool than Edgar's. Early on the morrow
Th' impatient monarch gave me swift commission
To view those charms, of which lord Ardulph's tongue
Had giv'n such warm description: to whose words
If my impartial eye gave full assent,
I had his royal mandate on the instant
To hail you queen of England.

Elf. 'Stead of which
You came, and hail'd me wife of Athelwold.
Was this the tale I was so taught to fear?
Was this the deed, that, known, would make me fly
Thy clasping arm, as 'twere the pois'nous adder?
No, let this tender, fond embrace assure thee,
That thy Elfrida's love can never die;
Or, if it could, this animating touch
Would soon rewake it into life and rapture.

Athel. Dost thou then pardon me? Come, injur'd sovereign,
Plunge deep thy sword of justice in this breast,
And I will die contented.

Elf. Heav'n forbid!
What can be done?

Cho. Indeed, ye constant pair,
'Tis fit ye strive to fly the coming danger.
For safety now sits wav'ring on your love,
Like the light down upon the thistle's beard,
Which ev'ry breeze may part. Say, noble earl,
What feint was us'd to lull the king's impatience?

Athel. Soon as these shades had veil'd my beauteous bride,

I hasted back to Edgar, laugh'd at Ardulph,
And talk'd of Elfrid, as of vulgar beauties;
Own'd no uncommon lightning in her eye,
No breast that sham'd the snow, or cheek the rose.
The sprightly king believ'd me, and forgot her.
Cho. But an alliance, great as Athelwold's
With Orgar's daughter, soon would blaze abroad,
The theme of popular converse.
Athel. True, it would;
And for that reason, when I last was here,
The king was taught I went to wed Elfrida.
Elf. How so, my lord?
Athel. Thy father, my Elfrida,
Has rich possessions: these, and these alone,
I made my theme of love; and told the king,
That though thy face (pardon the impious falsehood)
Boasted not charms to grace a monarch's throne,
Yet would thy dow'r well suit his minister.
I therefore meant to ask thee of thy father,
And (that my want of skill in choice might 'scape
All censure) hide thee close in Harewood castle.
Edgar with smiles consented, and, I think,
Harbours no thought of my disloyalty.
Elf. If so, what danger now?
Athel. Ask'st thou, what danger?
'Sdeath, will that glance not instantly proclaim
My tenfold treachery?
Elf. He shall not see me.
I'll hide me instant in some secret chamber,
And robe this virgin in my bridal vestments.
Athel. Thy love, like balm, runs trick'ling o'er the wounds
Of my torn bosom; yet 'tis vain, 'tis vain:
Thou must thyself appear, for Ardulph ever
Attends the king, and would detect the fraud.
Elf. If so, yet still I can insure our safety;
For as you fear my softness of complexion,
I'll stain it with the juice of dusky leaves,
Or yellow berries, which this various wood
From tree or shrub will yield me. These I'll use,
And form a thousand methods to conceal
The little gleams of grace, which nature lent me.
Fear not my caution.
Athel. Gentlest, best of creatures,
Go, do then as thy tender care directs.
And yet how vain? What wond'rous art can steal
The liquid lightnings from those radiant eyes,
Or rob the wavy ringlets of that hair
Of all their nameless graces? Say it could,
Yet would that modest, but majestic mien,
That inborn dignity of soul, which breathes
Through each angelic gesture, still remain
To seize the heart of Edgar. Rest, Elfrida,
Rest as thou art, in all that blaze of beauty:
I must submit to my just lot, and lose thee.
Elf. Away, my lord, with these too anxious scruples:
Fear not my carriage; I will stoop my head,
Drawl out an idiot phrase, and do each act
With even a rude and peasant awkwardness.
Edw. Ere this, my lord, I think, the king has reach'd
The full mid-way; 'twere fit you stood prepared
To give him meeting.
Athel. Give him meeting, Edwin!
Alas! I have no mask to veil my baseness.
When deep contrition shadows all my soul,
I cannot dress my features in light smiles,
And look the thing I am not. No, these eyes
Are not as yet true vassals to my purpose,
As yet indeed I am but half a villain.
Elf. You weigh this matter in too nice a balance.
Your crime, my lord, is but the crime of love:
Thousands like you have fail'd.
Athel. I know, Elfrida,
Could love absolve the crime, my soul were pure
As maiden innocence. Yes, I do love thee,
And thou art fair—beyond—But that's my bane;
Thy ev'ry charm adds weight to my offence,
And heaps fresh wrongs upon the best of masters.
Yes, Elfrid, Edgar was the best of masters.
O hide me from the thought in that dear bosom—
Heavens! I must die or keep her.
Elf. Live, or die,
I'm thine alike. Death cannot aught abate,
Or life augment, my love. Let this embrace
Be witness of my truth.
Athel. It shall, it shall:
Thy ev'ry word and look declares thee faithful.
Secure of all thy love, and all thy prudence,
Returning confidence has arm'd my soul
For this dread meeting: resting on thy truth
I go— [*Exit* ATHELWOLD.
Elf. Go, and thy guardian saint preserve thee,
Show'r blessings vast as would my lavish love,
Had I his power to bless thee!
Cho. Yes, my sisters,
The silent awe that reigns through all your train,
Befits ye well. Let admiration first
Pay her mute tribute. She can best express,
By those her kindling cheeks, and lifted eyes,
Where the tear twinkles, that transcendant praise
Elfrida's virtue claims.
Elf. My virtue, Virgins,
Is only love. Or, say that it be virtue,
It owes its source to love, to chastest love,
Than which what passion more impels the mind
To fair and gen'rous action? But the hours
Are precious now. I'll to yon neighb'ring grove:
There grows an azure flow'r, I oft have mark'd it,
Which stains the pressing finger, with a juice
Of dusky, yellow tinct: its name I know not.
I'll fetch and try it strait. Wait my return.
[*Exit* ELF.

ODE.

Cho. Whence does this sudden lustre rise,
That gilds the grove? Not like the noontide beam,
Which sparkling dances on the trembling stream,
Nor the blue lightning's flash swift-shooting through the skies.
But such a solemn steady light,
As o'er the cloudless azure steals,

When Cynthia, riding on the brow of night,
Stops in their mid career her silver wheels.

Whence can it rise, but from the sober pow'r
Of Constancy! She, heav'n-born queen,
Descends, and here in Harewood's hallow'd bower,
Fixes her stedfast reign:
Stedfast, as when her high command
Gives to the starry band
Their radiant stations in heav'n's ample plain;
Stedfast, as when around this nether sphere,
She winds the various year;
Tells what time the snow-drop cold
Its maiden whiteness may unfold,
When the golden harvest bend,
When the ruddy fruits descend.
Then bids pale winter wake, to pour
The pearly hail's translucent show'r,
To cast his silv'ry mantle o'er the woods,
And bind in crystal chains the slumb'ring floods.

The soul, which she inspires, has pow'r to climb
To all the heights sublime
Of virtue's tow'ring hill.
That hill, at whose low foot weak-warbling strays
The scanty stream of human praise,
A shallow trickling rill.
While on the summits hov'ring angels shed,
From their blest pinions, the nectareous dews
Of rich immortal Fame: from these the muse
Oft steals some precious drops, and skilful blends
With those the lower fountain lends;
Then show'rs it all on some high-favour'd head.
But thou, Elfrida, claim'st the genuine dew;
Thy worth demands it all,
Pure, and unmixt, on thee the holy drops shall fall. [ELFRIDA *returns with flowers.*

ELFRIDA, ORGAR, CHORUS.

Elf. [*Looking on the flower.*] 'Tis strange, my virgins, this sweet child of summer,
Silken and soft, whose breath perfumes the air,
Whose gay vest paints the morn, should in its bosom
Hide such pollution? Yet 'tis often thus:
All are not as they seem.
Org. Yet hear me, lady.
Elf. Begone, unmanner'd stranger, nor pursue me;
Hence, from the grove. Know ye this pilgrim, virgins?
On my return I met him here.
Cho. Alas!
We saw him here before, and heard his tale,
That mov'd our pity—But I fear me now,
'Twas false; some spy perchance, and may have heard—
Org. I have; yet not for that are you betray'd.
Fair excellence, my heart is bound unto you,
I feel a tender interest in your welfare,
Tender as fathers feel.
Elf. As fathers feel!
That well-known voice, and ah! that look—
Org. Elfrida!
Elf. Yes, it is him, it is my father, virgins.
Support me, or I faint! O wherefore, sir?—
Org. Take courage, daughter; my parental fondness
Prompted this visit. Thus I came disguis'd,
To learn the cause of my dear child's confinement:
And I have learnt it.
Elf. Then all's lost for ever.
Org. Thou know'st, Elfrida, next my house's honour,
Thy peace has ever been my dearest care.
But such an insult—No: I cannot brook it.
So black a fraud! By all my ancestors,
By Belin's shade I will have ample vengeance.
Elf. Alas, I know too well your dreadful purpose.
I knew it at the first. Yes, he must fall.
Yet pardon me, if my poor trembling heart
Puts up I know not what of pray'rs and vows
To ev'ry pitying saint. Celestial guardians
Of nuptial constancy! O bend from heav'n
Your star-crown'd heads, and hear a wretched woman,
That begs ye save, from a dread father's rage,
Her lord, her husband.
Org. Husband! 'sdeath, what husband?
Is Athelwold thy husband? Sooner call
Th' impeached thief true master of the booty
He stole, or murder'd for. Disdain the villain;
And help me to revenge thee.
Cho. Think, great earl,
What sanctimonious ties retain your daughter.
Did she not swear before the hallow'd shrine
Eternal fealty to this her lord?
Yet say, that he deceived her; shall her truth
Dare to revenge? No, sir, in highest heaven
Vengeance 'mid storms and tempests sits enshrin'd,
Vested in robes of light'ning, and there sleeps,
Unwak'd but by th' incens'd Almighty's call.
Oh! let not man presume to take unbid
That dread vicegerency.
Org. Peace, virgins, peace.
Not ev'n the saws of druids or of bards
Have weight with me, when insults high as this
Rouse my just indignation. Hear me, daughter!
You went to search for flow'rs, to blot your charms
With their dun hue. Yes, thou shalt search for flow'rs,
Yet shall they be the loveliest of the spring;
Flow'rs, that, entangling in thine auburn hair,
Or blushing 'mid the whiteness of thy bosom,
May, to the power of every native grace,
Give double life and lustre. Haste, my child,
Array thyself in thy most gorgeous garb,
And see each jewel, which my love procur'd thee,
Dart its full radiance. More than all, put on
The nobler ornament of winning smiles,
And kind inviting glances.
Elf. Never, never;
When this true heart renounces Athelwold,
May equitable heav'n—
Org. Away with vows;

And with a duteous and attentive ear,
Listen to my persuasions. Much I wish
Persuasions might prevail, that, not compell'd
To use a father's just prerogative,
My will may meet with thy unforc'd obedience.
Follow me, on thy duty.
Elf. Cruel father,
That duty shall obey you; I will follow:
Yet dread as is that frown, dreadful as death,
It shall not shake the tenor of my faith;
Living or dead I still am Athelwold's.
[*Exeunt* ORGAR *and* ELFRIDA.
Semicho. Horror! Horror!
The pen of fate, dipt in its deepest gall,
Perhaps on that ill-omen'd wall,
Now writes th' event of this tremendous day.
O! that our weaker sight
Could read the mystic characters, and spy
What, to the unpurg'd, mortal eye,
Is hid in endless night.
Semicho. Suspense! thou frozen guest, be gone.
The wretch whose rugged bed
Is spread on thorns, more softly rests his head,
Than he that sinks amid the cygnet's down,
If thou tormenting fiend, be nigh,
To prompt his starting tear, his ceaseless sigh,
His wish, his prayer, his vow for ling'ring certainty.
Cho. But hark! that certainty arrives. Methought
I heard the winding horn. I did not err;
The king is near at hand. This quick approach
Will sure prevent this proud earl's cruel purpose.
Yet what of that? Does her fair form require
The blazon of rich vesture? Genuine beauty
Nor asks, nor needs it: Negligence alone
Is its bright diadem, and artless ease
Its robe of Tyrian tincture. Say, my sisters,
Shall we salute this monarch with a hymn
Of festival and joy? Alas, such joy
Ill suits our trembling hearts and weeping eyes.
And now 'twere vain; for see, the king approaches!

EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, CHORUS.

Edg. No, Athelwold; not from a partial blindness,
Or for the mode and guise of courtesy,
Are we thus large in praise; in our true judgment,
This castle is not more kind nature's debtor
For its delicious site, than 'tis to thee
For this so goodly structure. From its base,
Ev'n to yon turret's trim and taper spires,
All is of choicest masonry. Each part
Doth boast a separate grace; but ornament,
Though here the richest that the eye can note,
Is us'd, not lavish'd; art seems generous here,
Yet not a prodigal. But ah! my earl,
[*Seeing the Chorus.*
What living charms are here? Thy castle's beauty
Must not detain me from this lovelier prospect.
Your pardon, fair ones, that my wayward eye
Paid not at first, where first was surely due,
Its homage to your graces.
Athel. Heav'ns! they weep.
What may this mean? Some dread and unseen chance
Has counter-work'd my safety.
Edg. Whence this silence;
Why are your lovely heads thus bow'd with sadness?
Beshrew my heart, my lord, but this is strange.
I know thee, earl, and know thy gentleness,
More prone t'obey, than lord it o'er the sex;
Else should I guess this sorrow had its rise
From some discourteous treatment.
Cho. No, dread sov'reign;
He is the noblest, gentlest, best of masters;
And may your love reward—

ORGAR, ATHELWOLD, EDGAR, CHORUS.

Athel. Death to my hopes!
Org. Yes, villain, start; but let this vengeful arm
Arrest thy baseness; would to heav'n its strength,
Thus grasping thee, could open thy false breast,
And bare thy heart to the sham'd eye of day.
Edg. Patience, hot man. What art thou?
Org. Earl of Devon!
Pardon me, prince, that this my honest rage
O'erleaps obedient duty. I am wrong'd,
Yet that's but small; for know, much-injur'd prince,
Thy wrongs as well as mine both call for justice.
Yes, sir, I here, on a true subject's oath,
Proclaim earl Athelwold a faithless traitor.
Edg. Ha! what is this? Renounce the word, old earl;
Thy length of years hath forc'd thee, sure, to press
The verge of dotage. Athelwold! what, Athelwold
A faithless traitor! Perish the suspicion.
Never before did word, or thought, or look,
Give doubt of his distinguish'd loyalty.
Dotage alone could frame the accusation.
Org. I do not dote; thank heav'n, my faculties
Are yet my own, unblemish'd and unhurt.
Would so my daughter were!
Edg. What is his drift?
Athel. Better, my royal lord, you mark'd him not;
The wayward earl is—
Org. What, audacious villain!
I will be heard.
Edg. Go too, thou choleric lord.
Org. When thou hast heard me, Edgar, then call me choleric.
Edg. Speak then, and briefly.
Org. Once, my sacred liege,
I had a daughter, duteous as e'er crown'd
A father's wish, and lovely as could warm
A youth to am'rous transports. This, my lord,
You learnt long since from noble Ardulph's praises,
And, fir'd with his description, sent this earl,
This faithful earl, t' invite her to your throne.
Edg. No, Orgar, not t' invite her to our throne,
Simply to note her beauty was his errand.

Org. Yes, he did note it, stampt it for his own.
But why this parley? Enter, sir, these gates,
And let Elfrida's features be the book,
Where you may read the story of his falsehood,
Ev'n on the instant.
Edg. Noble lord, lead on.
We'll follow to the trial. I will humour
The earl's hot temper. He has heard, my friend,
We meant t'exalt his daughter, and for that
His partial fondness, link'd with his ambition,
Levels this rage at thee. Attend us, lords.
[*Exeunt* EDGAR, ORGAR, *&c.*

CHORUS, ATHELWOLD.

Cho. My lord, the king is enter'd: stand not thus
In mute and fixt distress.
Athel. Away, away;
What! can a man that thinks such thoughts as I do
Have pow'r of word or motion? speak to me;
Inform me all. What said she, when I left her?
How came her father hither? how did she
Greet his arrival? Say, was she compell'd,
Or did her free and voluntary voice
Tell all the story? Did she marshal him,
To this his deed of vengeance?
Cho. Dearest master,
Elfrida told him not: his own deceit
Was his informer. Here the earl arriv'd
Early at morn, in mean and pilgrim weeds,
All like an ancient, toil-worn traveller;
And with a tale told in such piteous strain,
Fraught with such sad and moving circumstance,
With woes so well dissembled; that our softness
Suffered him enter this close bow'r for rest,
Which he adapting to his prying purpose,
Thence learnt the secret. This our disobedience,
We own—
Athel. Was my perdition. Yet 'tis well;
I blame ye not; it was Heav'n's justice, virgins;
This brought him hither, this annull'd your faith.
I do not think, you purpos'd my destruction;
But yet you have destroy'd me. O Elfrida,
And art thou faithful? This my jealous eye
Thought it had mark'd some speck of change upon thee;
Thought it had found, what might have made thy loss
Somewhat within endurance. 'Tis not so;
And this thy purity but serves t'augment
The sum of my distractions. Meet me, Edgar,
With thy rais'd sword: be merciful and sudden—
[*Exit* ATHELWOLD.

ODE.

Cho. Say, will no white-rob'd son of light,
Swift-darting from his heav'nly height,
Here deign to take his hallow'd stand;
Here wave his amber locks; unfold
His pinions cloth'd with downy gold;
Here smiling stretch his tutelary wand?
And you, ye host of saints, for ye have known
Each dreary path in life's perplexing maze,
Though now ye circle yon eternal throne
With harpings high of inexpressive praise,
Will not your train descend in radiant state,
To break with mercy's beam this gathering cloud of fate?
'Tis silence all. No son of light
Darts swiftly from his heav'nly height;
No train of radiant saints descend.
" Mortals, in vain ye hope to find,
If guilt, if fraud has stain'd your mind,
Or saint to hear, or angel to defend."
So Truth proclaims. I hear the sacred sound
Burst from the centre of her burning throne:
Where aye she sits with star-wreath'd lustre crown'd:
A bright sun clasps her adamantine zone.
So Truth proclaims: her awful voice I hear:
With many a solemn pause it slowly meets my ear.
" Attend, ye sons of men; attend, and say,
Does not enough of my refulgent ray
Break through the veil of your mortality!
Say, does not reason in this form descry
Unnumber'd, nameless glories, that surpass
The angel's floating pomp, the seraph's glowing grace?
Shall then your earth-born daughters vie
With me! Shall she, whose brightest eye
But emulates the diamond's blaze,
Whose cheek but mocks the peach's bloom,
Whose breath the hyacinths perfume,
Whose melting voice the warbling woodlark's lays,
Shall she be deem'd my rival? Shall a form
Of elemental dross, of mould'ring clay,
Vie with these charms imperial? The poor worm
Shall prove her contest vain. Life's little day
Shall pass, and she is gone: while I appear
Flush'd with the bloom of youth through Heav'n's eternal year.
" Know, mortals, know, ere first ye sprung,
Ere first these orbs in æther hung,
I shone amid the heav'nly throng.
These eyes beheld creation's day,
This voice began the choral lay,
And taught archangels their triumphant song.
Pleas'd I survey'd bright nature's gradual birth,
Saw infant light with kindling lustre spread,
Soft vernal fragrance clothe the flow'ring earth,
And ocean heave on his extended bed;
Saw the tall pine aspiring pierce the sky,
The tawny lion stalk, the rapid eagle fly.
" Last, man arose, erect in youthful grace,
Heav'n's hallow'd image stampt upon his face,
And, as he rose, the high behest was giv'n,
That I alone of all the host of heav'n,
Should reign protectress of the godlike youth.
Thus the Almighty spake, he spake and call'd me Truth."

ATHELWOLD, EDWIN, CHORUS.

Athel. Banish me! No. I'll die. For why should life

Remain a lonely lodger in that breast
Which honour leaves deserted? Idle breath!
Thou can'st not fill such vacancy. Begone.
This sword shall free——
Cho. O shame to fortitude!
Shame to that manly passion, which inspires
Its vigorous warmth, when the bleak blasts of fate
Would chill the soul. O call the ready virtue
Quick to thy aid, for she is ever near thee;
Is ever prompt to spread her sevenfold shield
O'er noble breasts.
Athel. And but o'er noble breasts;
Not o'er the breast which livid infamy
Indelibly has spotted. O shame, shame!
Sword, rid me of the thought.
Cho. Forbear, forbear;
Think what a sea of deep perdition whelms
The wretch's trembling soul, who launches forth
Unlicenc'd to eternity. Think, think;
And let the thought restrain thy impious hand.
The race of man is one vast marshall'd army,
Summon'd to pass the spacious realms of time,
Their leader the Almighty. In that march,
Ah, who may quit his post? when high in air
The chos'n archangel rides, whose right hand wields
Th' imperial standard of heav'n's providence,
Which, dreadly sweeping through the vaulted sky,
O'ershadows all creation.
Athel. I was once——
Yes, I was once (I have his royal word for't)
A man of such tried faith, such steady honour,
As mock'd all doubt and scruple.—What a change!
Now must that unstain'd, virgin character,
Be doom'd to gross and hourly prostitution,
Sating the lust of slander; and my wife,
My chaste Elfrida! O distraction, no,
I'll fly to save her.
Edw. Stay, my dearest master;
You rush on instant death.
Athel. I mean it, slave,
And would'st thou hinder me?
Edw. Yes, sir, I hold
'Tis duty to my king, and love to you,
Thus to oppose your entrance.
Athel. What, thou traitor!—
Thy pardon, Edwin, I forgot myself;
Forgot, that I stood here a banished man;
And that this gate was shut against its master.
And yet this gate leads to my dear Elfrida;
Can it be barr'd to me? O earth, cold earth,
Upon whose breast I cast this load of mis'ry,
Bear it awhile; and you, ye aged oaks,
Ye venerable fathers of this wood,
Who oft have cool'd beneath your arching shades
My humble ancestors, oft seen them hie
To your spread umbrage, from yon sultry field,
Their scene of honest labour, shade, ah! shade,
The last, the wretchedest of all their race.
I will not long pollute ye; for I mean
To pay beneath your consecrated gloom
A sacrifice to honour, and the ghosts
Of those progenitors, who sternly frown
On me their base descendant.
Edw. See, ye virgins,
How horror shades his brow; how fixed his eye;
Heav'ns! what despair—
Cho. Edwin, 'tis ever thus
With noble minds, if chance they slide to folly;
Remorse stings deeper, and relentless conscience
Pours more of gall into the bitter cup
Of their severe repentance.
Athel. 'Tis resolv'd:
I'll enter and demand a second audience.
And yet how vain! Ere I can reach his ear,
His ready train will stop me, and, with all
The cruel punctuality of office,
So prompt to act 'gainst fallen favourites,
Dismiss me with reproof.——Surely I heard her.
Was't not Elfrida's voice! 'Tis she herself.

ELFRIDA, EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, ORGAR, CHORUS.

Elf. No, I will once more clasp him to my bosom.
I will not be withheld. I will o'ertake him,
Will go with him to exile. Ha, my husband!
So quickly found? They thought to tear me from thee;
But we will part no more.
Edg. Take heed, Elfrida,
This ill-timed fondness may recall the fate
I just now freed him from; who loves like me
Can ill brook this. Or quit him, or he dies.
Athel. Yes, let me die! Death is my dearest wish.
Quit me, Elfrida! leave me to my fate.
'Tis just, 'tis just. Thus to my sov'reign's sword
Freely I bare my breast. Strike, injur'd prince;
But do not banish me.
Elf. What, Athelwold,
Is then the life, on whose dear preservation
Elfrida's peace depends, not worth the saving?
Die then. But ere thy murd'rer strikes the stroke,
Let me inform him, that his act destroys
No single life.
Edg. By heav'n, she loves the traitor
Beyond all hope of change——
Elf. No, Athelwold,
Thou shalt not die. That pause in royal Edgar
Bespeaks forgiveness. He will soon relent;
And mercy, flowing from his gracious tongue,
Seal thy full pardon. Let us kneel, my lord;
Seize the important moment; kneel together;
And, as these streaming eyes and lifted hands
Employ each act of silent supplication,
Do thou recount—Ah! no, thy modest tongue
Could never tell ev'n half the gallant story.
Be silent then. Let Edgar's self reflect;
For well I know his mem'ry writes thy virtues
Upon its fairest page. Yes, let him weigh
All thy past deeds of loyalty and faith,
'Gainst this so light a fault.
Edg. So light a fault!
Had he dislodg'd my richest coffer'd treasures,
Dispers'd sedition's poison 'mid my troops,
Or aim'd with daring and rebellious hand
To snatch these regal honours from my brow,
I sooner could have pardon'd.

Athel. Cease, Elfrida.
My doom is just—Yes, royal sir, I go
To banishment. I do deserve to breathe,
Deserve to bear this load of life about me,
For many years; so lengthen out my age,
List'ning the hourly knell of curst remembrance,
Whose leaden stroke shall tell to my sad soul
That I was faithful once.
Elf. O flinty Edgar,
What! will this penitence not move thee? Know
There is a rose-lipp'd seraph sits on high,
Who ever bends his holy ear to earth
To mark the voice of penitence, to catch
Her solemn sighs, to tune them to his harp,
And echo them in harmonies divine
Up to the throne of grace. Ev'n Heav'n is won
By penitence, and shall Heav'n's substitute,
Shall Edgar scorn——
Edg. Cease, cease, thou beauteous pleader!
Ah far too beauteous! Wouldst thou gain thy suit,
Why glows that vermeil lip? why rolls that eye
Bright as the ray of morn? Why in each gesture
Such inexpressive graces, but because
They're native all, and will not be conceal'd?
Else sure each charm betrays him, and becomes
An advocate, whose silent eloquence
Pleads 'gainst thy voice, and foils its tuneful power.—
Traitor! was this the face which thy false tongue
Profan'd as vulgar? This such common beauty
As the fair eye of day beheld each hour
In ev'ry clime he lighted? Base dissembler,
This instant quit our realm.
Elf. O stay thee, Edgar,
And once more hear me. At thy feet I fall
As earnest, and distrest a supplicant,
As e'er embrac'd the knees of majesty.
O spare thy country's guardian, Edgar, spare
Thy closest, surest friend. Let not one fault
Cancel his thousand, thousand acts of faith.
Alas! I fall to vainest repetition.
Grief, whelming grief, drowns all my faculties,
And leaves me nought but tears.
Edg. Rise, rise, Elfrida.
Elf. Shall he then live?
Edg. He shall, he shall, my fair.
If so he quit the realm within the space
Our sentence limited.
Elf. O stop not there;
That sentence will be death to Athelwold.
Think, for thou know'st full well his gentle nature,
Can he support the rigour of this doom?
Can he, who liv'd but in thy gracious smiles,
Who'd pine, if chance those smiles a single hour
Were dealt him thriftily; think, can he bear
The infamy of exile?
Edg. Hear me, Athelwold.
Did I not show'r on thy much favour'd head
My thickest honours, and with gift so ready
As out-run all request? Did I not hold thee
Still in such open confidence of friendship,
Such love as——
Athel. Sooner stab me than repeat it.
Edg. Yet give me hearing. I repeat not this
To taunt or gall thee. On my soul, thy worth
Did o'ertop all those honours, and thy zeal
Kept pace with my best love. Nor till this deed—
But such a deed! look there, look on that face.
Thou know'st me, Athelwold, hast seen me gaze
On a soft yielding fair one, 'till mine eye
Shot flames. Perdition seize me, if this heart
Knew love 'till now.
Athel. I see it plain, my liege,
Nor say I aught to lessen my offence.
No, here I kneel, Oh! cast but on my mis'ry
One kind forgiving glance; this ready sword
Shall expiate all.
Elf. Ah! will you? must he die?
Edg. No, stay thee, Athelwold, and sheath thy sword;
I never yet (save but this hour of rage)
Deem'd thee my subject. Thou wert still my friend;
And, injur'd as I am, thou still art such:
I do forego the word: to banish thee,
Or seal thy death, transcends a friend's just right.
Elf. Ah generous deed! ah godlike goodness! Virgins,
The king will pardon him. Wake each high note
Of praise, and gratitude, teach Edgar's name
To Harewood's furthest echo. O my sov'reign!
What words can speak my thanks—
Edg. Nay, check these transports,
Lest, if I see thee thus, my soul forget
Its milder purpose. I will leave thee, lady;
Yet first my lips must press this gentle hand,
And breathe one soft sigh of no common fervour.
Now on, my lords—Fair wonder of thy sex,
Adieu. We'll straight unto our realm of Mercia.
Yet first, as was our purpose, through this forest,
We'll chace the nimble roebuck; may the sport
More please us, than we hope. Earl Athelwold,
Thou too must join our train. Follow us straight.
[*Exeunt* EDGAR, *&c.*
Athel. I do, my liege. Elfrida, I have much
For thy lov'd ear, and have but one farewell
To tell it all—And yet——
Elf. Ah loiter not,
It may enrage. Farewell. Be sure, take heed
I come not in your talk; avoid ev'n thinking;
Check ev'n the sighs of absence. Haste, my earl,
O haste thee, as thou lov'st thy constant wife.
[*Exit* ATHEL.

ORGAR, ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

Org. Thy constant wife! ah, stain of all thy race,
Degen'rate girl! Henceforth be Orgar deem'd
Of soft, and dove-like temper, who could see
A child of his stoop to such vile abasement,
And yet forbore just wrath; forbore to draw
That blood she had defil'd from her mean veins.
But sure thou art not mine; some elve or faye
Did spirit away my babe, and by curst charms

Thee in her cradle plac'd. Nay hang not on me.
Dry, dry thy tears, they've done their office amply.
Edgar has pardon'd him. No, by my earldom!
I cannot think of majesty thus meanly.
He'll yet avenge it: What if chance he should not?
That stops not me; I have a heart, an arm,
A sword can do me justice.
Elf. Ah! my lord,
Are you still merciless? Alas, I hoped——
Org. What could'st thou hope, Elfrida? could'st thou think
I e'er would pardon his vile perfidy,
Or thine ignoble softness?
Elf. Dearest father,
Frown not thus sternly on me. I would fain
Touch your relenting soul, fain win your heart
To fatherly forgiveness. For through life
I've oft had pleasing proof how that forgiveness
Stoop'd to my fond persuasion. But I fear
Persuasion now has left me. My sad thoughts
Are all on wing, all following Athelwold,
Like unseen ministring spirits:—Pardon, sir,
That frown shall check me, I'll not mention him;
I will but plead for my own weakness, plead
For that soft sympathy of soul, which you
Deem base and servile. Base perhaps it might be,
Were I of bolder sex. But I, alas!——
Ah pardon me, if nature stampt me woman;
Gave me a heart soft, gentle, prone to pity,
And very fearful. Fearful, sure with cause
At this dread hour, when if one hapless word,
One sigh break forth unbid, it may rekindle
The monarch's rage—What has my phrenzy said?
I've wander'd from my meaning. Dearest virgins,
My rash tongue more inflames him. O assist me,
Ye are not thus opprest with inward horror:
Kneel, plead, persuade, convince——
Cho. Alas, my mistress,
What may a servant's accents do t'appease
This furious earl?
Org. Ye well may spare them: maidens,
Know my firm soul's resolv'd, and be my heart
As base as Athelwold's, if it foregoes
The honest resolution. Think what I,
What Britain suffers from this traitor's fraud:
Had Edgar took my daughter to his bed,
Our British line, which now is doom'd to sink
In vile subjection, had again assum'd
The pall of royalty, with half its power,
In time perchance the whole. But this false Saxon
Shall with his life repay me. Here I'll wait
His first return, and in his own domain
Give him fair combat. I have known the time
When this good arm had hardihood enough
For thrice his prowess. What is lost through age,
My just cause shall supply; and he shall fall
As did the traitor Oswald, whose bold tongue
Defam'd me to king Athelstan: To the ground
My sharp launce nail'd the caitiff. [*Exit* ORGAR.

ELFRIDA, CHORUS.

Elf. Think, my lord,
Will Athelwold, will he enter those lists,
Where conquest would be parricide? Alas,
He hears me not. Go, thou obdurate man.
A daughter's tears will but the more provoke thee.
I will not follow him. No, poor Elfrida!
All thou canst do is here to stand, and weep,
And feel that thou art wretched.
Cho. Dearest mistress,
Restrain this flood of tears, perhaps——
Elf. Perhaps!
Ah! mock me not with hopes.
Cho. We do not mean it:
For hope, though 'tis pale sorrow's only cordial,
Has yet a dull and opiate quality,
Enfeebling what it lulls. It suits not you;
For, as we fear——
Elf. Do you too fear? Alas!
I flatter'd my poor soul that all its fears
Were grief's distemper'd coinage, that my love
Rais'd causeless apprehensions, and at length
Edgar would quite forgive. I do bethink me,
My joy broke forth too rashly. When they left us,
His safety was not half secured; my pleading
Was not half heard; I should have follow'd Edgar,
Claim'd more full pardon, forc'd him to embrace
My sorrowing lord.
Cho. We fear that sorrow more
Than Edgar's rage. We fear his fallen virtue.
Self-condemnation works most strongly on him,
Even to despondency. Even at his pardon,
No joy flush'd on his cheek; we mark'd him well,
He shew'd no sign of welcome. No, he took it
As who should say, 'To give me aught but death
'Is a poor boon unwish'd and unaccepted.'
Too much we fear he'll do some impious act—
Elf. What, on his life? I thought I had explor'd
Each various face of danger: this escap'd me.
How miss'd I this? It suits his courage highly;
Suits too his fix'd remorse.—But yet he will not,
No, Athelwold, thou wilt not kill Elfrida.
Cho. O may his love preserve him: may these shades
Receive him soon in peace. To this blest end
You sure should strive to calm your father's rage;
At least not suffer him, as now, retir'd
To brood o'er his revenge. For know, Elfrida,
Beneath the silent gloom of solitude
Though peace can sit and smile; though meek content
Can keep the cheerful tenor of her soul,
Even in the loneliest shades; yet let not wrath
Approach, let black revenge keep far aloof,
Or soon they flame to madness.
Elf. True, my virgins;
Attend me then: I'll try each winning art:
Though ill such art becomes me, yet I'll aim it.
Hark—whence that noise? I heard some hasty footsteps.
Cho. O Heavens! 'tis Edwin.

ELFRIDA, EDWIN, CHORUS.

Elf. Edwin, ah! that look
Bespeaks too well the horror of thy errand.
Tell it me all.
Edw. Alas!——

Elf. Nay, do not pause.
Tell it me all. I think it will not kill me.
Repeat each circumstance. I'm ready, Edwin,
Even for the worst.
Edw. Then hear that worst, Elfrida.
Soon as the stag had left yon westward thicket,
The king dismiss'd his lords, each several ways,
To their best sport, bidding earl Athelwold,
Lord Ardulph, and myself, attend his person.
Thus parted from the rest, the monarch pierc'd
A darkling dell, which opened in a lawn
Thick set with elm around. Suddenly here
He turn'd his steed, and cried, 'This place befits
'Our purpose well.'
Elf. Purpose! what purpose, Edwin?
'Twas predetermin'd then, dissembling tyrant!
How could I trust, or hope—
Edw. Yet give me hearing:
Thus with a grave composure, and calm eye,
King Edgar spake. Now hear me, Athelwold;
Thy king has pardon'd this thy trait'rous act:
From all disloyal baseness to thy prince
Thou stand'st absolv'd; yet, know, their still remains
Somewhat to cancel more. As man to man,
As friend to friend, now, Athelwold, I call thee
Straight to defend thy life with thy good sword.
Nay, answer not; defend it gallantly.
If thy arm prosper, this my dying tongue
Shall pardon thee, and bless thee. If thou fall'st,
Thy parting breath must to my right resign
Elfrida's beauties. At the word, both drew,
Both fought; but Athelwold's was ill-play'd passion.
He aim'd his falchion at the monarch's head,
Only to leave his own brave breast defenceless.
And on the instant Edgar's rapid sword
Pierc'd my dear master's heart. He fell to earth,
And, falling, cry'd, 'This wound atones for all.
'Edgar, thus full aveng'd, will pardon me,
'And my true wife, with chaste, connubial tears,
'Embalm my memory.' He smil'd, and died.
Elf. Nay, come not round me, virgins, nor support me.
I do not swoon, nor weep. I call not heaven
To avenge my wretchedness. I do not wish
This tyrant's hand may wither with cold palsies.
No, I am very patient. Heav'n is just!
And, when the measure of his crimes is full,
Will bare its red right arm, and launce its lightnings.
'Till then, ye elements, rest: and thou, firm earth,
Ope not thy yawning jaws, but let this monster
Stalk his due time on thine affrighted surface.
Yes; let him still go on; still execute
His savage purposes, and daily make
More widows weep, as I do. Foolish eyes!
Why flow ye thus unbidden? What have tears
To do with grief like mine?
Cho. Help, help, my sisters,
To bear her to the castle.

ORGAR, ELFRIDA, EDWIN, CHORUS.

Org. As I past,
Methought I heard a sound of loud lament;
Elfrida, ah!
Elf. Is not my father there?
Withhold me not; I'll fall at his dear feet.
O sir! behold your child thus lowly prostrate;
Avenge her wrongs, avenge your poor Elfrida,
Your helpless, widow'd daughter.
Org. Widow'd daughter!
What, is he slain?
Elf. Inhospitably butcher'd;
The tyrant's savage self—Stand you thus cool?
Where is the British spirit, where the sire
Of Belin's race?——O foolishness of grief!
Alas, I had forgot; had Edgar spar'd him,
That sword, to which my madness call'd for vengeance,
Ere long was meant to do the bloody deed,
And make the murder parricide. Have I
No friend to do me right?
Org. Thou hast, my child;
I am thy friend, thy father. Trust my care.
Edwin, a word. Retire, my dearest daughter:
Virgins, conduct her in.
Elf. My father, no.
What do you do? I must not be withheld.
I'll to yon bloody grove, and clasp my husband,
My murder'd husband. Why restrain me, sir?
Can my sad eye dart fire through his cold breast,
And light up life anew?
Org. Go in, my child,
And seek tranquillity.
Elf. Tranquillity!
I know her well; she is Death's pale-ey'd sister;
She's now in yonder grove closing the lids
Of my poor Athelwold. That office done,
She'll bear his soul upon her gentle plumes
Up to the realms of joy. I'll follow them:
I know he'd have it so: He'll not be blest,
Ev'n on his throne of bliss, till I am with him.
Cho. This way, my dearest mistress.
Elf. Hold, nay hold;
Crowd not around me. Let me pause a while.
Albina, thou alone shalt join my mis'ry;
I've much to utter to thy friendly ear.
Lead on, thou gentle maid; thy single arm
Shall prop my trembling frame; thy single voice
Speak peace to my afflictions.
[*Exit with the principal virgin.*

ORGAR, EDWIN, SEMICHORUS.

Org. On your lives,
Virgins, let no disturbing step approach her.
Say, Edwin (for I guess 'twas you that brought
These tidings hither) where was royal Edgar,
When late you left him?
Edw. At my master's side,
Repentant of the stroke.
Org. Comes he not back
To Harewood?

Semicho. Heav'n forbid! Elfrida's brain
Would madden at the sight.
Org. Mistake not, virgins;
I did not mean at this distressful hour
The king should see my daughter.
Semicho. No, for pity,
Do not profane this sabbath of her grief.
O be her sorrow sacred!
Org. Fear not, virgins,
Her peace is my best care, and, to ensure it,
I'll haste this instant, by young Edwin's guidance,
To find the monarch. Some four miles from Harewood
Stands old Egbert's castle, my fast friend.
With him will I persuade the king to sojourn,
'Till my child's grief abate; that too to speed
Be it your business, virgins. Watching ever
Each happy interval, when your soft tongues
May hint his praises, 'till, by practice won,
She bear their fuller blazon. Elfrida's welfare
Requires this friendly office at your hands;
And Edgar's virtues bear such genuine lustre,
That truth itself directs. [*Exit* ORGAR.
Semicho. As truth directs,
So only shall we act. This day has shewn
What dire effects await its violation.
Straight is the road of truth, and plain;
And, though across the sacred way
Ten thousand erring footsteps stray,
'Tis ours to walk direct,
And, with sage caution circumspect,
Pace slowly through the solemn scene.
[*The principal virgin returns.*
Semicho. Has Orgar left the grove?
Semicho. He has, my sister.
Semicho. Then hear, and aid Elfrida's last resolve,
Who takes the only way stern fate has left,
To save her plighted faith for ever pure
To her dead Athelwold.
Semicho. Forbid it, patience;
Forbid it, that submissive calm of soul,
Which teaches meek-ey'd piety to smile
Beneath the scourge of Heav'n.
Semicho. Ye need not fear it,
She means not self-destruction. Thanks to heav'n,
Huge and o'erbearing as her mis'ry is,
It cannot so oblit'rate from her breast
The written rule of duty. Her pure soul
Means, on the instant, to devote itself
To heav'n and holiness. Assist her straight,
Lest Edgar's presence, and her father's rage,
Prevent the blest intention. See, she comes.
Kneel on each side, devoutly kneel around her;
And breathe some pray'r in high and solemn strains,
That angels from their thrones of light may hear,
And ratify her vow.

ELFRIDA, CHORUS. ELFRIDA *kneels, and the virgins divide in two troops.*

Semicho. Hear, angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of light;
And O! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
Then wing your solemn flight
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
'Mid the dread records of eternity.
Elf. Hear first, that Athelwold's sad widow swears
To rear a hallow'd convent o'er the place,
Where stream'd his blood: there will she weep through life,
Immur'd with this chaste throng of virgins; there
Each day shall six times hear her full-voic'd choir
Chaunt the slow requiem o'er her martyr'd lord;
There too, when midnight lours with awful gloom,
She'll rise observant of the stated call
Of waking grief, bear the dim livid taper
Along the winding isles, and at the altar
Kiss ev'ry pale shrine with her trembling lips,
Press the cold stone with her bent knee, and call
On sainted Athelwold.
Semicho. Hear, angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of light;
And O! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
Then wing your solemn flight
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
'Mid the dread records of eternity.
Elf. Hear next, that Athelwold's sad widow swears
Never to violate the holy vow
She to his truth first plighted; swears to bear
The sober singleness of widowhood
To her cold grave. If from this chaste resolve
She even in thought should swerve; if gaudy pomp,
Or flatt'ring greatness e'er should tempt one wish
To stray beyond this purpose; may that heav'n,
Which hears this vow, punish its violation,
As heav'nly justice ought.
Cho. Hear, angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of light;
And O! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
Then wing your solemn flight
Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
'Mid the dread records of eternity.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

CARACTACUS.

A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY

MASON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AULUS DIDIUS, *the Roman General.*
VELLINUS, } *Sons of Cartismandua.*
ELIDURUS, }
CHORUS, * *of Druids and Bards.*

CARACTACUS.

EVELINA, *Daughter to Caractacus.*
ARVIRAGUS, *Son to Caractacus.*

SCENE,—*Mona.*

AULUS DIDIUS, *with Romans.*

THIS is the secret centre of the isle:
Here, Romans, pause, and let the eye of wonder
Gaze on the solemn scene; behold yon oak,
How stern he frowns, and with his broad brown arms
Chills the pale plain beneath him: mark yon altar,
The dark stream brawling round its rugged base,
These cliffs, these yawning caverns, this wide circus,
Skirted with unhewn stone: they awe my soul,
As if the very genius of the place
Himself appear'd, and with terrific tread
Stalk'd through his drear domain. And yet, my friends,
(If shapes like his be but the fancy's coinage)
Surely there is a hidden power, that reigns
'Mid the lone majesty of untam'd nature,
Controuling sober reason; tell me else,
Why do these haunts of barb'rous superstition
O'ercome me thus? I scorn them, yet they awe me.
Call forth the British princes: in this gloom
I mean to school them to our enterprise.

Enter VELLINUS *and* ELIDURUS.

Ye pledges dear of Cartismandua's faith,
Approach! and to mine uninstructed ear
Explain this scene of horror.

Eli. Daring Roman,
Know that thou stand'st on consecrated ground:
These mighty piles of magic-planted rock,
Thus rang'd in mystic order, mark the place
Where but at times of holiest festival
The Druid leads his train.

Aulus. Where dwells the seer?

Vel. In yonder shaggy cave; on which the moon
Now sheds a side-long gleam. His brotherhood
Possess the neighb'ring cliffs.

Aulus. Yet up the hill
Mine eye descries a distant range of caves,
Delv'd in the ridges of the craggy steep:
And this way still another.

Eli. On the left,

* The dramatic part of the Chorus is supposed to be chiefly spoken by the principal Druid; the lyrical part sung by the Bards.

Reside the sages skill'd in nature's lore:
The changeful universe, its numbers, powers,
Studious they measure, save when meditation
Gives place to holy rites: then in the grove
Each hath his rank and function. Yonder grots
Are tenanted by Bards, who nightly thence,
Rob'd in their flowing vests of innocent white,
Descend, with harps that glitter to the moon,
Hymning immortal strains. The spirits of air,
Of earth, of water, nay of heav'n itself,
Do listen to their lay: and oft, 'tis said,
In visible shapes dance they a magic round
To the high minstrelsy. Now, if thine eye
Be sated with the view, haste to thy ships;
And ply thine oars; for, if the Druids learn
This bold intrusion, thou wilt find it hard
To foil their fury.

Aulus. Prince, I did not moor
My light-arm'd shallops on this dangerous strand
To sooth a fruitless curiosity:
I come in quest of proud Caractacus;
Who, when our veterans put his troops to flight,
Found refuge here.

Eli. If here the monarch rests,
Presumptuous chief! thou might'st as well essay
To pluck him from yon stars: Earth's ample range
Contains no surer refuge: underneath
The soil we tread, a hundred secret paths,
Scoop'd through the living rock in winding maze,
Lead to as many caverns, dark, and deep:
In which the hoary sages act their rites
Mysterious, rites of such strange potency,
As, done in open day, would dim the sun,
Though throned in noontide brightness. In such dens
He may for life lie hid.

Aulus. We know the task
Most difficult: yet has thy royal mother
Furnish'd the means.

Eli. My mother say'st thou, Roman?

Aulus. In proof of that firm faith she lends to Rome,
She gave you up her honour's hostages.

Eli. She did: and we submit.

Aulus. To Rome we bear you;
From your dear country bear you; from your joys,
Your loves, your friendships, all your souls hold precious.

Eli. And dost thou taunt us, Roman, with our fate?

Aulus. No, youth, by heav'n, I would avert that fate.
Wish ye for liberty?

Vel. Eli. More than for life.

Aulus. And would do much to gain it?

Vel. Name the task.

Aulus. The task is easy. Haste ye to these Druids:
Tell them ye come, commission'd by your queen,
To seek the great Caractacus; and call
His valour to her aid, against the legions,
Which, led by our Ostorius, now assail
Her frontiers. The late treaty she has seal'd
Is yet unknown: and this her royal signet,
Which, more to mask our purpose, was obtain'd,
Shall be your pledge of faith. The eager king
Will gladly take the charge; and, he consenting,
What else remains, but to the Meinai's shore
Ye lead his credulous step? there will we seize him,
Bear him to Rome, the substitute for you,
And give you back to freedom.

Vel. If the Druids—

Aulus. If they, or he, prevent this artifice,
Then force must take its way: then flaming brands,
And biting axes, wielded by our soldiers,
Must level these thick shades, and so unlodge
The lurking savage.

Eli. Gods, shall Mona perish?

Aulus. Princes, her ev'ry trunk shall on the ground
Stretch its gigantic length; unless, ere dawn,
Ye lure this untam'd lion to our toils.
Go then, and prosper; I shall to the ships,
And there expect his coming. Youths, remember,
He must to Rome to grace great Cæsar's triumph:
Cæsar and fate demand him at your hand.

[*Exeunt* AULUS DIDIUS *and Romans.*

ELIDURUS, VELLINUS.

Eli. And will heav'n suffer it? Will the just gods,
That tread yon spangled pavement o'er our heads,
Look from their sky and yield him? Will these Druids,
Their sage vicegerents, not call down the thunder;
And will not instant its hot bolts be darted
In such a righteous cause? Yes, good old king,
Yes, last of Britons, thou art heav'n's own pledge;
And shalt be such till death.

Vel. What means my brother?
Dost thou refuse the charge?

Eli. Dost thou accept it?

Vel. It gives us liberty.

Eli. It makes us traitors.
Gods, would Vellinus do a deed of baseness?

Vel. Will Elidurus scorn the proffer'd boon
Of freedom?

Eli. Yes, when such its guilty price,
Brother, I spurn it.

Vel. Go then, foolish boy!
I'll do the deed myself.

Eli. It shall not be:
I will proclaim the fraud.

Vel. Wilt thou? 'tis well.
Hie to yon cave; call loudly on the Druid;
And bid him drag to ignominious death
The partner of thy blood. Yet hope not thou
To 'scape; for thou didst join my impious steps;
Therefore his wrath shall curse thee: thou shalt live;
Yet shalt thou live an interdicted wretch,
All rights of nature cancell'd.

Eli. O Vellinus!
Rend not my soul: by heav'n thou know'st I love thee,
As fervently as brother e'er lov'd brother:
And, loving thee, I thought I lov'd mine honour.
Ah! do not wake, dear youth, in this true breast
So fierce a conflict.
Vel. Honour's voice commands
Thou should'st obey thy mother, and thy queen.
Honour and holiness alike conspire
To bid thee save these consecrated groves
From Roman devastation.
Eli. Horrid thought!
Hence let us haste, ev'n to the furthest nook
Of this wide isle; nor view the sacrilege.
Vel. No, let us stay, and by our prosperous art
Prevent the sacrilege. Mark me, my brother,
More years and more experience have matur'd
My sober thought; I will convince thy youth,
That this our deed has ev'ry honest sanction
Cool reason may demand.
Eli. To Rome with reason:
Try if 'twill bring her deluging ambition
Into the level course of right and justice:
Try if 'twill tame these insolent invaders;
Who thus, in savageness of conquest, claim
Whom chance of war has spar'd. Do this and prosper.
But, pray thee, do not reason from my soul
Its inbred honesty: that holy flame,
Howe'er eclips'd by Rome's black influence
In vulgar minds, ought still to brighten ours.
Vel. Vain talker, leave me.
Eli. No, I will not leave thee:
I must not, dare not, in these perilous shades.
Think, if thy fraud should fail, these holy men,
How will their justice rend thy trait'rous limbs?
If thou succeed'st, the fiercer pangs of conscience,
How will they ever goad thy guilty soul?
Mercy, defend us! see, the awful druids
Are issuing from their caves: hear'st thou yon signal?
Lo, on the instant all the mountain whitens
With slow-descending bards. Retire, retire;
This is the hour of sacrifice: to stay
Is death.
Vel. I'll wait the closing of their rites
In yonder vale: do thou, as likes thee best,
Betray, or aid me.
Eli. To betray thee, youth,
That love forbids; honour, alas! to aid thee.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter CHORUS.

Semicho. Sleep and silence reign around;
Not a night-breeze wakes to blow;
Circle, sons, this holy ground;
Circle close, in triple row.
And, if mask'd in vapours drear,
Any earth-born spirit dare
To hover round this sacred space,
Haste with light spells the murky foe to chace.
Lift your boughs of vervain blue,
Dipt in cold September dew;
And dash the moisture, chaste and clear,
O'er the ground, and through the air.
Now the place is purg'd and pure.
Brethren! say, for this high hour
Are the milk-white steers prepar'd,
Whose necks the rude yoke never scar'd,
To the furrow yet unbroke?
For such must bleed beneath yon oak.
Semicho. Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.
Semicho. But tell me yet,
Cadwall! did thy step profound
Dive into the cavern deep,
Twice twelve fathom under ground,
Where our sage forefathers sleep?
Thence with reverence hast thou borne,
From the consecrated chest,
The golden sickle, scrip, and vest,
Whilom by old Belinus worn?
Semicho. Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.
Semicho. But tell me yet,
From the grot of charms and spells,
Where our matron sister dwells,
Brennus! has thy holy hand
Safely brought the druid wand;
And the potent adder-stone,
Gender'd 'fore th' autumnal moon?
When, in undulating twine,
The foaming snakes prolific join;
When they hiss, and when they bear
Their wond'rous egg aloof in air;
Thence, before to earth it fall,
The druid, in his hallow'd pall,
Receives the prize;
And instant flies,
Follow'd by th' envenom'd brood,
'Till he cross the crystal flood.
Semicho. Druid, these, in order meet,
Are all prepar'd.
Semicho. Then all's complete.
And now let nine of the selected band,
Whose greener years befit such station best,
With wary circuit pace around the grove:
And guard each inlet; watchful, lest the eye
Of busy curiosity profane
Pry on our rites: which now must be as close
As done i'th' very central womb of earth.
Occasion claims it; for Caractacus
This night demands admission to our train.
He, once our king, while aught his power avail'd
To save his country from the rod of tyrants,
That duty past, does wisely now retire
To end his days in secrecy and peace;
Druid with druids, in this chief of groves,
Ev'n in the heart of Mona. See, he comes!
How awful is his port! mark him, my friends!
He looks, as doth the tower, whose nodding walls,
After the conflict of heav'n's angry bolts,
Frown with a dignity unmark'd before,
Ev'n in its prime of strength. Health to the king.

CARACTACUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

Car. This holy place, methinks, doth this night wear

More than its wonted gloom: Druid, these groves
Have caught the dismal colouring of my soul,
Changing their dark dun garbs to very sable,
In pity to their guest. Hail, hallow'd oaks!
Hail, British born! who, last of British race,
Hold your primæval rights by nature's charter;
Not at the nod of Cæsar. Happy foresters,
Ye wave your bold heads in the liberal air;
Nor ask, for privilege, a prætor's edict.
Ye, with your tough and intertwisted roots,
Grasp the firm rocks ye sprung from; and, erect
In knotty hardihood, still proudly spread
Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
Who, Roman-like, assails you. Tell me, druid,
Is it not better to be such as these,
Than be the thing I am?

Cho. To be the thing,
Eternal wisdom wills, is ever best.

Car. But I am lost to that predestin'd use
Eternal wisdom will'd, and fitly therefore
May wish a change of being. I was born
A king; and heaven, who bade these warrior oaks
Lift their green shields against the fiery sun,
To fence their subject plain, did mean, that I
Should, with as firm an arm, protect my people
Against the pestilent glare of Rome's ambition.
I fail'd; and how I fail'd, thou know'st too well;
So does the babbling world: and therefore, druid,
I would be any thing, save what I am.

Cho. See, to thy wish, the holy rites prepar'd,
Which, if heav'n frown not, consecrate thee druid:
See to the altar's base the victims led,
From whose free-gushing blood ourself shall read
Its high behests; which, if assenting found,
These hands around thy chosen limbs shall wrap
The vest of sanctity: while at the act
Yon white-rob'd bards, sweeping their solemn harps,
Shall lift their choral warblings to the skies,
And call the gods to witness. Meanwhile, prince,
Bethink thee well, if aught on this vain earth
Still holds too firm an union with thy soul,
Estranging it from peace.

Car. I had a queen:
Bear with my weakness, druid! this tough breast
Must heave a sigh, for she is unreveng'd.
And can I taste true peace, she unreveng'd?
So chaste, so lov'd a queen? ah, Evelina!
Hang not thus weeping on the feeble arm
That could not save thy mother.

Evel. To hang thus
Softens the pang of grief; and the sweet thought,
That a fond father still supports his child,
Sheds, on my pensive mind, such soothing balm,
As doth the blessing of these pious seers,
When most they wish our welfare. Would to heav'n
A daughter's presence could as much avail,
To ease her father's woes, as his doth mine!

Car. Ever most gentle! come unto my bosom:
Dear pattern of the precious prize I lost,
Lost, so inglorious lost; my friends, these eyes
Did see her torn from my defenceless camp;
Whilst I, hemm'd round by squadrons, could not save her:
My boy, still nearer to the darling pledge,
Beheld her shrieking in the ruffian's arm;
Beheld, and fled.

Evel. Ah! sir, forbear to wound
My brother's fame; he fled, but to recall
His scatter'd forces, to pursue and save her.

Car. Daughter, he fled. Now, by yon gracious moon,
That rising saw the deed, and instant hid
Her blushing face in twilight's dusky veil,
The flight was parricide.

Evel. Indeed, indeed,
I know him valiant; and not doubt he fell
'Mid slaughter'd thousands of the haughty foe,
Victim to filial love. Arviragus,
Thou hadst no sister near the bloody field,
Whose sorrowing search, led by yon orb of night,
Might find thy body; wash with tears thy wounds;
And wipe them with her hair.

Cho. Peace, virgin, peace:
Nor thou, sad prince, reply; whate'er he is,
Be he a captive, fugitive, or corse,
He is what heav'n ordain'd: these holy groves
Permit no exclamation against heaven's will
To violate their echoes: Patience, here,
Her meek hands folded on her modest breast,
In mute submission lifts th' adoring eye,
Ev'n to the storm that wrecks her.

Evel. Holy druid,
If aught my erring tongue has said pollutes
This sacred place, I from my soul abjure it.
And will these lips bar with eternal silence,
Rather than speak a word, or act a deed
Unmeet for thy sage daughters; blessing first
This hallow'd hour, that takes me from the world,
And joins me to their sober sisterhood.

Cho. 'Tis wisely said. See, prince, this prudent maid,
Now, while the ruddy flame of sparkling youth
Glows on her beauteous cheek, can quit the world
Without a sigh, whilst thou——

Car. Would save my queen
From a base ravisher; would wish to plunge
This falchion in his breast, and so avenge
Insulted royalty. O holy men!
Ye are the sons of piety and peace;
Ye never felt the sharp vindictive spur,
That goads the injur'd warrior; the hot tide,
That flushes crimson on the conscious cheek
Of him, who burns for glory; else indeed
Ye much would pity me: would curse the fate
That coops me here inactive in your groves,
Robs me of hope, tells me this trusty steel
Must never cleave one Roman helm again;
Never avenge my queen, nor free my country.

Cho. 'Tis heaven's high will——

Car. I know it, reverend fathers!
'Tis heaven's high will, that these poor aged eye
Shall never more behold that virtuous woman,
To whom my youth was constant; 'twas heaven will

To take her from me at that very hour,
When best her love might soothe me; that black hour,
(May memory ever raze it from her records!)
When all my squadrons fled, and left their king
Old and defenceless: him, who nine whole years
Had taught them how to conquer: Yes, my friends,
For nine whole years against the sons of rapine
I led my veterans, oft to victory,
Never 'till then to shame. Bear with me, druid,
I've done: begin the rites.

Cho. O would to heav'n
A frame of mind, more fitted to these rites,
Possessed thee, prince! that Resignation meek,
That dove-ey'd Peace, handmaid of Sanctity,
Approach'd this altar with thee: 'stead of these,
See I not gaunt Revenge, ensanguin'd Slaughter,
And mad Ambition, clinging to thy soul,
Eager to snatch thee back to their domain,
Back to a vain and miserable world;
Whose misery and vanity, though tried,
Thou still hold'st dearer than these solemn shades,
Where quiet reigns with virtue? Try we yet
What holiness can do! for much it can:
Much is the potency of pious prayer:
And much the sacred influence convey'd
By sage mysterious office: when the soul,
Snatch'd by the power of music from her cell
Of fleshly thraldom, feels herself upborne
On plumes of extasy, and boldly springs,
'Mid swelling harmonies and pealing hymns,
Up to the porch of heav'n. Strike, then, ye bards!
Strike all your strings symphonious; wake a strain
May penetrate, may purge, may purify,
His yet unhallow'd bosom; call ye hither
The airy tribe, that on yon mountain dwell,
Ev'n on majestic Snowdon: they, who never
Deign visit mortal men, save on some cause
Of highest import, but, sublimely shrin'd
On its hoar top in domes of crystalline ice,
Hold converse with those spirits, that possess
The skies' pure sapphire, nearest heav'n itself.

ODE.

Mona on Snowdon calls:
Hear, thou king of mountains, hear;
Hark, she speaks from all her strings;
Hark, her loudest echo rings;
King of mountains, bend thine ear:
Send thy spirits, send them soon,
Now, when midnight and the moon
Meet upon thy front of snow:
See, their gold and ebon rod,
Where the sober sisters nod,
And greet in whispers sage and slow.
Snowdon, mark! 'tis magic's hour;
Now the mutter'd spell hath power;
Pow'r to rend thy ribs of rock,
And burst thy base with thunder's shock;
But to thee no ruder spell
Shall Mona use, than those that dwell
In music's secret cells, and lie
Steep'd in the stream of harmony.
Snowdon has heard the strain:
Hark, amid the wond'ring grove,
Other harpings answer clear,
Other voices meet our ear,
Pinions flutter, shadows move,
Busy murmurs hum around,
Rustling vestments brush the ground;
Round, and round, and round they go,
Through the twilight, through the shade,
Mount the oak's majestic head,
And gild the tufted misseltoe.
Cease, ye glittering race of light,
Close your wings, and check your flight:
Here, arrang'd in order due,
Spread your robes of saffron hue;
For lo, with more than mortal fire,
Mighty Mador smites the lyre:
Hark, he sweeps the master-strings;
Listen all——

Cho. Break off; a sullen smoke involves the altar;
The central oak doth shake; I hear the sound
Of steps profane: Caractacus, retire;
Bear hence the victims; Mona is polluted.

Semicho. Father, as we did watch the eastern side,
We spied and instant seiz'd two stranger youths,
Who, in the bottom of a shadowy dell,
Held earnest converse: Britons do they seem,
And of Brigantian race.

Cho. Haste, drag them hither.

VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Eli. O spare, ye sage and venerable druids!
Your countrymen and sons.

Cho. And are ye Britons?
Unheard-of profanation! Rome herself,
Ev'n impious Rome, whom conquest makes more impious,
Would not have dar'd so rashly. O! for words,
Big with the fiercest force of execration,
To blast the deed and doers.

Eli. Spare the curse,
Oh spare our youth!

Cho. Is it not now the hour,
The holy hour, when to the cloudless height
Of yon starr'd concave climbs the full-orb'd moon,
And to this nether world in solemn stillness
Gives sign, that to the list'ning ear of heav'n
Religion's voice should plead? The very babe
Knows this, and, chance awak'd, his little hands
Lifts to the gods, and on his innocent couch
Calls down a blessing. Shall your manly years
Plead ignorance, and impiously presume
To tread, with vile unconsecrated feet,
On Mona's hallow'd plain? know, wretches, know,
At any hour such boldness is a crime,
At this 'tis sacrilege.

Vel. Were Mona's plain
More hallow'd still, hallow'd as is heav'n's self,
The cause might plead our pardon.

Eli. Mighty druid!
True, we have rashly dar'd, yet forced by duty,
Our sov'reign's mandate——

Vel. Elder by my birth,

Brother, I claim, in right of eldership,
To open our high embassy.
Cho. Speak then;
But see thy words answer in honest weight
To this proud prelude. Youth! they must be weighty,
T'atone for such a crime.
Vel. If then to give
New nerves to vanquish'd valour; if to do,
What, with the blessing of the gods, may save
A bleeding country from oppression's sword,
Be weighty business, know, on our commission,
And on its hop'd success, that weight depends.
Cho. Declare it then at once, briefly and boldly.
Vel. Caractacus is here.
Cho. Say'st thou, proud boy?
'Tis boldly said, and, grant 'twere truly said,
Think'st thou he were not here from fraud or force
As safe, as in a camp of conquerors?
Here, youth, he would be guarded by the gods;
Their own high hostage; and each sacred hair
Of his selected head, would in these caverns
Sleep with the unsunn'd silver of the mine,
As precious and as safe; record the time,
When Mona e'er betrayed the hapless wretch,
That made her groves his refuge.
Vel. Holy druid!
Think not so harshly of our enterprise.
Can force, alas! dwell in our unarm'd hands?
Can fraud in our young bosoms? No, dread seer;
Our business told, I trust thou'lt soon disclaim
The vain suspicion; and thy holy ear
(Be brave Caractacus or here or absent)
Shall instant learn it. From the north we come;
The sons of her, whose heav'n-entrusted sway
Blesses the bold Brigantes; men who firmly
Have three long moons withstood those Roman powers,
Which, led by fell Ostorius, still assail
Our frontiers: yet so oft have our stout swords
Repell'd their hot assault, that now, like falcons,
They hang suspended, loth to quit their prey,
Nor daring yet to seize it. Such the state
Of us and Rome; in which our prudent mother,
Revolving what might best secure her country
From this impending ruin, gave us charge
To seek the great Caractacus, and call
His valour to her aid, to lead her bands,
To fight the cause of liberty and Britain,
And quell these ravagers.
[CAR. *starts from behind the altar.*

CARACTACUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Car. And ye have found me;
Friends, ye have found me: lead me to your queen,
And the last purple drop in these old veins
Shall fall for her and Britain.
Cho. Rash, rash prince!
Vel. Ye blest immortal powers! is this the man,
The more than man, who for nine bloody years
Withstood all Rome? He is, that warlike front,
Seam'd o'er with honest scars, proclaims he is;
Kneel, brother, kneel, while in his royal hand
We lodge the signet: this, in pledge of faith,
Great Cartismandua sends, and with it tells thee
She has a nobler pledge than this behind;
Thy queen——
Car. Guideria!
Vel. Safely with our mother.
Car. How, when, where rescu'd? Mighty gods, I thank ye!
For it is true, this signet speaks it true.
O tell me briefly.
Vel. In a sally, prince,
Which, wanting abler chiefs, my gracious mother
Committed to my charge, our troops assail'd
One outwork of the camp; the mask of night
Favour'd our arms, and there my happy hand
Was doom'd with other prisoners to release
The captive matron.
Car. Let me clasp thee, youth,
And thou shalt be my son: I had one, stranger,
Just of thy years; he look'd, like thee, right honest;
Had just that freeborn boldness on his brow,
And yet he fail'd me. Were it not for him,
Who, as thou seest, even at this hour of joy,
Draws tears down mine old cheek, I were as blest
As the great gods. Oh, he has all disgrac'd
His high-born ancestry! But I'll forget him.
Haste, Evelina, barb my knotty spear,
Bind fast this trusty falchion to my thigh,
My bow, my target——
Cho. Rash Caractacus!
What hast thou done? What dost thou mean to do?
Car. To save my country.
Cho. To betray thyself.
That thou hast done; the rest thou canst not do,
If Heaven forbids; and of its awful will
Thy fury recks not: Has the bleeding victim
Pour'd a propitious stream? The milk-white steeds
Unrein'd and neighing pranc'd with fav'ring steps?
Say, when these youths approach'd, did not a gust
Of livid smoke involve the bickering flame?
Did not the forest tremble? every omen
Led thee to doubt their honesty of purpose;
And yet, before their tongues could tell that purpose,
Ere I had tender'd, as our laws ordain,
Their test of faith, thy rudeness rush'd before me,
Infringing my just rights.
Car. Druid, methinks,
At such a time, in such a cause, reproof
Might bate its sternness. Now, by Heaven, I feel,
Beyond all omens, that within my breast,
Which marshals me to conquest; something here
That snatches me beyond all mortal fears,
Lifts me to where, upon her jasper throne,
Sits flame-rob'd Victory, who calls me son,
And crowns me with a palm, whose deathless green
Shall bloom when Cæsar's fades.
Cho. Vain confidence!
Car. Yet I submit in all——
Cho. 'Tis meet thou should'st.
Thou art a king, a sovereign o'er frail man;

I am a druid, servant of the gods;
Such service is above such sov'reignty,
As well thou know'st: if they should prompt these lips
To interdict the thing thou dar'st to do,
What would avail thy daring?
Car. Holy man!
But thou wilt bless it; Heaven will bid thee bless it;
Thou know'st that, when we fight to save our country,
We fight the cause of Heaven. The man that falls,
Falls hallowed, falls a victim for the gods;
For them and for their altars.
Cho. Valiant prince!
Think not we lightly rate our country's weal,
Or thee, our country's champion. Well we know
The glorious meed of those exalted souls,
Who flame like thee for freedom: mark me, prince,
The time will come, when Destiny and Death,
Thron'd in a burning car, the thund'ring wheels
Arm'd with gigantic scythes of adamant,
Shall scour this field of life: and in the rear
The fiend Oblivion: kingdoms, empires, worlds
Melt in the general blaze: when, lo, from high
Andraste darting, catches from the wreck
The roll of fame, claps her ascending plumes,
And stamps on orient stars each patriot name,
Round her eternal dome.
Car. Speak ever thus,
And I will hear thee, 'till attention faint
In heedless extacy.
Cho. This though we know,
Let man beware with headlong zeal to rush
Where slaughter calls; it is not courage, prince,
No, nor the pride and practis'd skill in arms,
That gains this meed: the warrior is no patriot,
Save when, obsequious to the will of Heaven,
He draws the sword of vengeance.
Car. Surely, druid,
Such fair occasion speaks the will of Heaven—
Cho. Monarch, perchance thou hast a fair occasion:
But, if thou hast, the gods will soon declare it:
Their sov'reign will thou know'st not; this to learn
Demands our search. Ye mortals, all retire!
Leave ye the grove to us and inspiration;
Nor let a step, or even one glance profane,
Steal from your caverns: stay, my holy brethren,
Ye time-ennobled seers, whose rev'rend brows
Full eighty winters whiten; you, ye bards,
Leoline, Cadwall, Hoel, Cantaber,
Attend upon our slumbers: wond'rous men,
Ye, whose skill'd fingers know how best to lead,
Through all the maze of sound, the wayward step
Of harmony, recalling oft, and oft
Permitting her unbridled course to rush
Through dissonance to concord, sweetest then
Even when expected harshest. Mador, thou
Alone shalt lift thy voice; no choral peal
Shall drown thy solemn warblings; thou best know'st
That opiate charm which lulls corporeal sense:
Thou hast the key, great bard! thou best can ope
The portal of the soul; unlock it straight,
And lead the pensive pilgrim on her way,
Through the vast regions of futurity.

[*Exeunt* CAR. VEL. *&c.*

ODE.

Cho. Hail, thou harp of Phrygian flame!
In years of yore that Camber bore
From Troy's sepulchral flame:
With ancient Brute, to Britain's shore
The mighty minstrel came:
Sublime upon thy burnish'd prow,
He bad thy manly modes to flow;
Britain heard the descant bold,
She flung her white arms o'er the sea;
Proud in her leafy bosom to enfold
The freight of harmony.

Mute 'till then was every plain,
Save where the flood o'er mountains rude
Tumbled his tide amain:
And echo from th' impending wood
Resounded the hoarse strain;
While from the north the sullen gale
With hollow whistlings shook the vale;
Dismal notes, and answer'd soon
By savage howl the heaths among,
What time the wolf doth bay the trembling moon,
And thin the bleating throng.

Thou spak'st, imperial lyre,
The rough roar ceas'd, and airs from high
Lapt the land in extacy:
Fancy, the fairy, with thee came;
And Inspiration, bright-ey'd dame,
Oft at thy call would leave her sapphire sky;
And, if not vain the verse presumes,
Even now some chaste divinity is near:
For lo! the sound of distant plumes
Pants through the pathless desart of the air.
'Tis not the flight of her;
'Tis Sleep, her dewy harbinger.
Change, my harp, O change thy measures;
Cull, from thy mellifluous treasures,
Notes that steal on even feet,
Ever slow, yet never pausing,
Mixed with many a warble sweet,
In a ling'ring cadence closing,
While the pleas'd power sinks gently down the skies,
And seals with hand of down the druid's slumbering eyes.

Thrice I pause, and thrice I sound
The central string, and now I ring
(By measur'd lore profound)
A sevenfold chime, and sweep, and swing
Above, below, around,
To mix thy music with the spheres,
That warble to immortal ears.
Inspiration hears the call;
She rises from her throne above,
And, sudden as the glancing meteors fall,
She comes, she fills the grove.

High her port; her waving hand
A pencil bears; the days, the years,
Arise at her command,
And each obedient colouring wears.
Lo, where Time's pictur'd band
In hues ethereal glide along;
O mark the transitory throng;
Now they dazzle, now they die,
Instant they flit from light to shade,
Mark the blue forms of faint futurity,
O mark them ere they fade!

Whence was that inward groan?
Why bursts through closed lids the tear?
Why uplifts the bristling hair
Its white and venerable shade!
Why down the consecrated head
Courses in chilly drops the dew of fear?
All is not well, the pale-ey'd moon
Curtains her head in clouds, the stars retire,
Save from the sultry south alone
The swart star flings his pestilential fire;
Even Sleep herself will fly,
If not recall'd by Harmony.
Wake, my lyre! thy softest numbers,
Such as nurse ecstatic slumbers,
Sweet as tranquil virtue feels
When the toil of life is ending,
While from the earth the spirit steals,
And, on new-born plumes ascending,
Hastens to lave in the bright fount of day,
'Till destiny prepare a shrine of purer clay.
[*The Druid waking, speaks.*
Cho. It may not be. Avaunt, terrific axe!
Why hangs thy bright edge glaring o'er the grove?
O for a giant's nerve to ward the stroke!
It bows, it falls.
Where am I? hush, my soul!
'Twas all a dream. Resume no more the strain:
The hour is past, my brethren! what ye saw,
(If what ye saw, as by your looks, I read,
Bore like ill-omen'd shape) hold it in silence.
The midnight air falls chilly on my breast;
And now I shiver, now a fev'rish glow
Scorches my vitals. Hark, some step approaches.

EVELINA, CHORUS.

Evel. Thus, with my wayward fears, to burst unbidden
On your dread synod, rousing, as ye seem,
From holy trance, appears a desperate deed,
Even to the wretch who dares it.
Cho. Virgin! quickly
Pronounce the cause.
Evel. Bear with a simple maid
Too prone to fear, perchance my fears are vain.
Cho. But yet declare them.
Evel. I suspect me much
The faith of these Brigantes.
Cho. Say'st thou, virgin?
Heed what thou say'st; suspicion is a guest
That in the breast of man, of wrathful man,
Too oft his welcome finds; yet seldom sure
In that submissive calm that smooths the mind
Of maiden innocence.
Evel. I know it well:
Yet must I still distrust the elder stranger:
For while he talks, (and much the flatterer talks)
His brother's silent carriage gives disproof
Of all his boast; indeed I mark'd it well;
And, as my father with the elder held
Bold speech and warlike, as is still his wont
When fir'd with hope of conquest, oft I saw
A sigh unbidden heave the younger's breast,
Half check'd as it was rais'd; sometimes, methought,
His gentle eye would cast a glance on me,
As if he pitied me; and then again
Would fasten on my father, gazing there
To veneration; then he'd sigh again,
Look on the ground, and hang his modest head
Most pensively.
Cho. This may demand, my brethren,
More serious search: Virgin! proceed.
Evel. 'Tis true,
My father, rapt in high heroic zeal,
His every thought big with his country's freedom,
Heeds not the different carriage of these brethren,
The elder takes him wholly; yet, methinks,
The younger's manners have I know not what,
That speaks him far more artless. This besides,
Is it not strange, if, as the tale reports,
My mother sojourns with this distant queen,
She should not send or to my sire, or me,
Some fond remembrance of her love? ah! none,
With tears I speak it, none, not her dear blessing
Has reach'd my longing ears.
Cho. The gods, my brethren,
Have wak'd these doubts in the untainted breast
Of this mild maiden; oft to female softness,
Oft to the purity of virgin souls
Doth heav'n its voluntary light dispense,
When victims bleed in vain. They must be spies.
Hie thee, good Cantaber, and to our presence
Summon the young Brigantian.
Evel. Do not that,
Or, if ye do, yet treat him nothing sternly:
The softest terms from such a tender breast
Will draw confession, and, if ye shall find
The treason ye suspect, forbear to curse him.
(Not that my weakness means to guide your wisdom)
Yet, as I think he would not wittingly
E'er do a deed of baseness, were it granted
That I might question him, my heart forebodes
It more could gain by gentleness and prayers,
Than will the fiercest threats.
Cho. Perchance it may:
And quickly shalt thou try. But see, the king!
And with him both the youths.
Evel. Alas! my fears
Forewent my errand, else had I inform'd thee
That therefore did I come, and from my father,
To gain admission. Mark the younger, druid,
How sad he seems; oft did he in the cave
So fold his arms——
Cho. We mark him much, and much
The elder's free and dreadless confidence.
Virgin, retire awhile in yonder vale,
Nor, 'till thy royal father quits the grove,

Resume thy station here. [*Exit* EVEL.

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, VELLINUS, ELIDURUS.

Car. Forgive me, druid!
My eager soul no longer could sustain
The pangs of expectation; hence I sent
The virgin innocence of Evelina,
Safest to break upon your privacy:
She not return'd, O pardon! that uncall'd
I follow: the great cause, I trust, absolves me:
'Tis yours, 'tis freedom's, 'tis the cause of heav'n;
And sure heav'n owns it such.
Cho. Caractacus,
All that by sage and sanctimonious rites
Might of the gods be ask'd, we have essay'd,
And yet, nor to our wish, nor to their wont,
Gave they benign assent.
Car. Death to our hopes!
Cho. While yet we lay in sacred slumber tranc'd,
Sullen and sad to Fancy's frighted eye
Did shapes of dun and murky hue advance,
In train tumultuous, all of gesture strange,
And passing horrible; starting we wak'd,
Yet felt no waking calm; still all was dark,
Still rang our tinkling ears with screams of woe.
Suspicious tremors still——
Vel. Of what suspicious?
Druid, our queen——
Cho. Restrain thy wayward tongue,
Insolent youth! in such licentious mood
To interrupt our speech ill suits thy years,
And worse our sanctity.
Car. 'Tis his distress
Makes him forget, what else his reverent zeal
Would pay ye holily. Think what he feels,
Poor youth! who fears yon moon, before she wanes,
May see his country conquer'd; see his mother
The victor's slave, her royal blood debas'd,
Dragging her chains through the throng'd streets of Rome,
To grace oppression's triumph. Horrid thought!
Say, can it be that he, whose strenuous youth
Adds vigour to his virtue, e'er can bear
This patiently? he comes to ask my aid,
And, that withheld, (as now he needs must fear)
What means, alas! are left? search Britain round,
What chief dares cope with Rome? what king but holds
His loan of power at a proconsul's will,
At best a scepter'd slave?
Vel. Yes, monarch, yes,
If Heav'n restrains thy formidable sword,
Or to its stroke denies that just success
Which Heav'n alone can give, I fear me much
Our queen, ourselves, nay Britain's self, must perish.
Car. But is not this a fear makes virtue vain?
Tears from yon ministering regents of the sky
Their right? Plucks from firm-handed Providence,
The golden reins of sublunary sway,
And gives them to blind chance? If this be so,
If tyranny must lord it o'er the earth,
There's anarchy in Heav'n. Nay, frown not, druid,
I do not think 'tis thus.
Cho. We trust thou dost not.
Car. Masters of wisdom! No: my soul confides
In that all-healing and all-forming power,
Who, on the radiant day when time was born,
Cast his broad eye upon the wild of ocean,
And calm'd it with a glance: then plunging deep
His mighty arm, pluck'd from its dark domain
This throne of freedom, lifted it to light,
Girt it with silver cliffs, and call'd it Britain:
He did, and will preserve it.
Cho. Pious prince,
In that all-healing and all-forming power
Still let thy soul confide; but not in men,
No, not in these, ingenuous as they seem,
'Till they are tried by that high test of faith
Our ancient laws ordain.
Vel. Illustrious seer,
Methinks our sov'reign's signet well might plead
Her envoy's faith. Thy pardon, mighty druid,
Not for ourselves, but for our queen we plead;
Mistrusting us, ye wound her honour.
Cho. Peace;
Our will admits no parley. Thither, youths,
Turn your astonish'd eyes; behold yon huge
And unhewn sphere of living adamant,
Which pois'd by magic, rests its central weight
On yonder pointed rock: firm as it seems,
Such is its strange and virtuous property,
It moves obsequious to the gentlest touch
Of him, whose breast is pure; but to a traitor,
Though ev'n a giant's prowess nerv'd his arm,
It stands as fix'd as Snowdon. No reply;
The gods command that one of you must now
Approach and try it: in your snowy vests,
Ye priests, involve the lots, and to the younger,
As is our wont, tender the choice of fate.
Eli. Heav'ns! is it fall'n on me?
Cho. Young prince, it is;
Prepare thee for thy trial.
Eli. Gracious gods!
Who may look up to your tremendous thrones,
And say his breast is pure? All-searching powers,
Ye know already how and what I am;
And what ye mean to publish me in Mona,
To that I yield and tremble.
Car. Rouse thee, youth!
And, with that courage honest truth supplies,
(For sure ye both are true) haste to the trial;
Behold I lead thee on.
Cho. Prince, we arrest
Thy hasty step; to witness this high test
Pertains to us alone. A while retire,
And in yon cave his brother be thy charge:
The trial past, again we will confer,
Touching that part which heav'n's deciding choice
Wills thee to act. [*Exeunt* CAR. *and* VEL.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS.

Cho. Now be the rites prepar'd:
And now, ye bards, chaunt ye that custom'd hymn,

The prelude of this fam'd solemnity.

ODE.

Thou spirit pure, that spread'st unseen
Thy pinions o'er this pond'rous sphere,
And, breathing through each rigid vein,
Fill'st with stupendous life the marble mass,
And bid'st it bow upon its base,
When sov'reign truth is near;
Spirit invisible! to thee
We swell the solemn harmony;
Hear us, and aid:
Thou, that in virtue's cause
O'er-rulest nature's laws,
O hear, and aid with influence high
The sons of peace and piety.

First-born of that ethereal tribe
Call'd into birth ere time or place,
Whom wave nor wind can circumscribe,
Heirs of the liquid liberty of light,
That float on rainbow pennons bright
Through all the wilds of space,
Yet thou alone of all thy kind
Canst range the regions of the mind,
Thou only know'st
That dark meand'ring maze,
Where wayward Falsehood strays,
And, seizing swift the lurking sprite,
Forces her forth to shame and light.

Thou canst enter the dark cell
Where the vulture Conscience slumbers,
And, unarm'd by charming spell,
Or magic numbers,
Canst rouse her from her formidable sleep,
And bid her dart her raging talons deep;
Yet, ah! too seldom doth the furious fiend
Thy bidding wait; vindictive, self-prepar'd,
She knows her torturing time; too sure to rend
The trembling heart, when Virtue quits her guard.
Pause then, celestial guest!
And, brooding on thine adamantine sphere,
If fraud approach, spirit, that fraud declare;
To Conscience and to Mona leave the rest.

Cho. Heard'st thou the awful invocation, youth,
Wrapt in those holy harpings?

Eli. Sage, I did;
And it came o'er my soul as doth the thunder,
While distant yet, with an expected burst,
It threats the trembling ear. Now to the trial.

Cho. Ere that, bethink thee well what rig'rous doom
Attends thine act; if failing, certain death:
So certain, that in our absolving tongues
Rests not that power may save thee: Thou must die.

EVELINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Evel. Die, say'st thou, druid?

Eli. Evelina here!
Lead to the rock.

Cho. No, youth, awhile we spare thee;
And, in our stead, permit this royal maiden
To urge thee first with virgin gentleness;
Respect our clemency, and meet her questions
With answers prompt and true; so may'st thou 'scape
A sterner trial.

Eli. Rather to the rock——

Evel. Dost thou disdain me, prince? Lost as I am,
Methinks the daughter of Caractacus
Might merit milder treatment: I was born
To royal hopes and promise, nurs'd i'th'lap
Of soft Prosperity; alas the change!
I meant but to address a few brief words
To this young prince, and he doth turn his eye,
And scorns to answer me.

Eli. Scorn thee, sweet maid?
No, 'tis the fear——

Evel. And canst thou fear me, youth?
Ev'n while I led a life of royalty,
I bore myself to all with meek deportment,
In nothing harsh, or cruel; and, howe'er
Misfortune works upon the minds of men,
(For some they say it turns to very stone)
Mine, I am sure, it softens. Wert thou guilty,
Yet I should pity thee; nay, wert thou leagu'd
To load this suffering heart with more misfortunes,
Still should I pity thee; nor e'er believe
Thou would'st, on free and voluntary choice,
Betray the innocent.

Eli. Indeed I would not.

Evel. No, gracious youth, I do believe thou would'st not:
For on thy brow the liberal hand of Heav'n
Has pourtray'd truth as visible and bold,
As were the pictur'd suns that deck'd the brows
Of our brave ancestors. Say then, young prince,
(For therefore have I wish'd to question thee)
Bring ye no token of a mother's fondness
To her expecting child? Gentle thou seem'st,
And sure that gentleness would prompt thine heart
To visit, and to sooth with courteous office,
Distress like her's. A captive and a queen
Has more than common claim for pity, prince,
And ev'n the ills of venerable age
Were cause enough to move thy tender nature.
The tears o'ercharge thine eye. Alas, my fears!
Sickness or sore infirmity had seiz'd her,
Before thou left'st the palace, else her lips
Had to thy care entrusted some kind message,
And blest her hapless daughter by thy tongue.
Would she were here!

Eli. Would heav'n she were!

Evel. Ah why?

Eli. Because you wish it.

Evel. Thanks, ingenuous youth,
For this thy courtesy. Yet, if the queen
Thy mother shines with such rare qualities,
As late thy brother boasted, she will calm
Her woes, and I shall clasp her aged knees
Again, in peace and liberty.——Alas!
He speaks not; all my fears are just.

Eli. What fears?
The queen Guideria is not dead.

Evel. Not dead!
But is she in that happy state of freedom,
Which we were taught to hope? Why sigh'st thou, youth?

Thy years have yet been prosp'rous. Did thy father
E'er lose a kingdom? Did captivity
E'er seize thy shrieking mother? thou can'st go
To yonder cave, and find thy brother safe:
He is not lost, as mine is. Youth, thou sigh'st
Again; thou hast not sure such cause for sorrow;
But if thou hast, give me thy griefs, I pray thee;
I have a heart can softly sympathize,
And sympathy is soothing.
Eli. O gods! gods!
She tears my soul. What shall I say?
Evel. Perchance,
For all in this bad world must have their woes,
Thou too hast thine; and may'st, like me, be wretched.
Haply amid the ruinous waste of war,
'Mid that wild havoc, which those sons of blood
Bring on our groaning country, some chaste maid,
Whose tender soul was link'd by love to thine,
Might fall the trembling prey to Roman rage,
Ev'n at the golden hour, when holy rites
Had seal'd your virtuous vows. If it were so,
Indeed I pity her!
Eli. Not that: not that.
Never 'till now did beauty's matchless beam——
But I am dumb.
Evel. Why that dejected eye?
And why this silence? That some weighty grief
O'erhangs thy soul, thy ev'ry look proclaims.
Why then refuse it words? The heart, that bleeds
From any stroke of fate or human wrongs,
Loves to disclose itself, that list'ning Pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.
'Tis only, when with inbred horror smote
At some base act, or done, or to be done,
That the recoiling soul, with conscious dread,
Shrinks back into itself. But thou, good youth—
Eli. Cease, royal maid! permit me to depart.—
Evel. Yet hear me, stranger! Truth and secrecy,
Though friends, are seldom necessary friends—
Eli. I go to try my truth—
Evel. O! go not hence,
In wrath; think not, that I suspect thy virtue:
Yet ignorance may oft make virtue slide,
And if——
Eli. In pity spare me.
Evel. If thy brother——
Nay, start not, do not turn thine eye from mine;
Speak, I conjure thee, is his purpose honest?
I know the guilty price, that barbarous Rome
Sets on my father's head; and gold, vile gold,
Has now a charm for Britons: Brib'd by this,
Should he betray him—Yes, I see thou shudder'st
At the dire thought; yet not, as if 'twere strange,
But as our fears were mutual. Ah, young stranger;
That open face scarce needs a tongue to utter
What works within. Come then, ingenuous prince,
And instant make discovery to the druid,
While yet 'tis not too late.
Eli. Ah! what discover?
Say, whom must I betray?
Evel. Thy brother.
Eli. Ha!
Evel. Who is no brother, if his guilty soul
Teems with such perfidy. O all ye stars!
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who would betray an old and honour'd king,
That king his countryman, and one whose prowess
Once guarded Britain 'gainst th' assailing world?
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who from a young, defenceless, innocent maid,
Would take that king her father? Make her suffer
All that an orphan suffers? More perchance:
The ruffian foe.—O tears, ye choak my utterance!
Can he be brother to a youth like thee,
Who would defile his soul by such black deeds?
It cannot be——And yet, thou still art silent.
Turn, youth, and see me weep. Ah, see me kneel:
I am of royal blood, not wont to kneel,
Yet will I kneel to thee. O save my father!
Save a distressful maiden from the force
Of barbarous men! Be thou a brother to me,
For mine alas! ha! [*Sees* ARVIRAGUS *entering.*

ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA, ELIDURUS, CHORUS.

Arvi. Evelina, rise!
Know, maid, I ne'er will tamely see thee kneel,
Ev'n at the foot of Cæsar.
Evel. 'Tis himself:
And he will prove my father's fears were false,
False, as his son is brave. Thou best of brothers,
Come to my arms. Where hast thou been, thou wanderer?
How wer't thou sav'd? Indeed, Arviragus,
I never shed such tears, since thou wer't lost,
For these are tears of rapture.
Arvi. Evelina!
Fain would I greet thee, as a brother ought:
But wherefore did'st thou kneel?
Evel. O! ask not now.
Arvi. By heav'n I must, and he must answer me,
Whoe'er he be. What art thou, sullen stranger?
Eli. A Briton.
Arvi. Brief and bold.
Evel. Ah, spare the taunt:
He merits not thy wrath. Behold the druids;
Lo, they advance: with holy reverence first
Thou must address their sanctity.
Arvi. I will.
But see, proud boy, thou dost not quit the grove,
'Till time allows us parley.
Eli. Prince, I mean not.
Arvi. Sages, and sons of heav'n! Illustrious druids!
Abruptly I approach your sacred presence;
Yet such dire tidings——
Cho. On thy peril, peace!
Thou stand'st accus'd, and by a father's voice,
Of crimes abhorr'd, of cowardice and flight;
And therefore may'st not in these sacred groves
Utter polluted accents. Quickly say,

Wherefore thou fledst? For, that base fact unclear'd,
We hold no further converse.
Arvi. O ye gods!
Am I the son of your Caractacus?
And could I fly?
Cho. Waste not or time or words:
But tell us why thou fled'st?
Arvi. I fled not, druid;
By the great gods I fled not! Save to stop
Our dastard troops, that basely turn'd their backs.
I stopt, I rallied them, when lo! a shaft
Of random cast did level me with earth,
Where pale and senseless, as the slain around me,
I lay 'till midnight: Then, as from long trance
Awoke, I crawl'd upon my feeble limbs
To a lone cottage, where a pitying hind
Lodg'd me and nourish'd me. My strength repair'd,
It boots not that I tell, what humble arts
Compell'd I us'd to screen me from the foe.
How now a peasant from a beggarly scrip
I sold cheap food to slaves, that nam'd the price,
Nor after gave it; now a minstrel poor,
With ill-tun'd harp, and uncouth descant shrill,
I ply'd a thriftless trade, and by such shifts
Did win obscurity to shroud my name.
At length to other conquests in the north
Ostorius led his legions: Safer now,
Yet not secure, I to some valiant chiefs,
Whom war had spar'd, discover'd what I was;
And with them plann'd, how surest we might draw
Our scatter'd forces to some rocky fastness
In rough Caernarvon, there to breathe in freedom,
If not with brave incursion to oppress
The thinly-station'd foe. And soon our art
So well avail'd, that now at Snowdon's foot
Full twenty troops of hardy veterans wait
To call my sire their leader.
Cho. Valiant youth——
Evel. He is——I said he was a valiant youth,
Nor has he sham'd his race.
Cho. We do believe
Thy modest tale: And may the righteous gods
Thus ever shed upon thy noble breast
Discretion's cooling dew. When nurtur'd so,
Then, only then, doth valour bloom mature.
Arvi. Yet vain is valour, howsoe'er it bloom:
Druid, the gods frown on us. All my hopes
Are blasted; I shall ne'er rejoin my friends,
Ne'er bless them with my father. Holy men,
I have a tale to tell, will shake your souls.
Your Mona is invaded; Rome approaches,
Ev'n to these groves approaches.
Semicho. Horror! horror!
Arvi. Late as I landed on yon highest beach,
Where nodding from the rocks the poplars fling
Their scatter'd arms, and dash them in the wave,
There were their vessels moor'd, as if they sought
Concealment in the shade, and as I past
Up yon thick-planted ridge, I spy'd their helms
'Mid brakes and boughs trench'd in the heath below,
Where like a nest of night-worms did they glitter,
Sprinkling the plain with brightness. On I sped
With silent step, yet oft did pass so near,
'Twas next to prodigy, I 'scap'd unseen.
Cho. Their number, prince?
Arvi. Few, if mine hasty eye
Did find, and count them all.
Cho. O brethren, brethren,
Treason and sacrilege, worse foes than Rome,
Have led Rome hither. Instant seize that wretch,
And bring him to our presence.

CHORUS, ELIDURUS, ARVIRAGUS.

Cho. Say, thou false one!
What doom befits the slave, who sells his country?
Eli. Death, sudden death!
Cho. No, ling'ring piecemeal death;
And to such death thy brother and thyself
We now devote. Villain, thy deeds are known;
'Tis known, ye led the impious Romans hither
To slaughter us ev'n on our holy altars.
Eli. That on my soul doth lie some secret grief,
These looks perforce will tell: It is not fear,
Druids, it is not fear that shakes me thus;
The great gods know, it is not: Ye can never:
For, what though wisdom lifts ye next those gods,
Ye cannot, like to them, unlock men's breasts,
And read their inmost thoughts. Ah! that ye could!
Arvi. What hast thou done?
Eli. What, prince, I will not tell.
Cho. Wretch, there are means——
Eli. I know, and terrible means;
And 'tis both fit, that you should try those means,
And I endure them: Yet I think, my patience
Will for some space baffle your torturing fury.
Cho. Be that best known, when our inflicted goads
Harrow thy flesh!
Arvi. Stranger, ere this is tried,
Confess the whole of thy black perfidy;
So black, that when I look upon thy youth,
Read thy mild eye, and mark thy modest brow,
I think indeed, thou durst not.
Eli. Such a crime
Indeed I durst not; and would rather be
The very wretch thou seest. I'll speak no more.
Cho. Brethren, 'tis so. The virgin's thoughts were just:
This youth has been deceiv'd.
Eli. Yes, one word more.
You say, the Romans have invaded Mona.
Give me a sword and twenty honest Britons,
And I will quell those Romans. Vain demand!
Alas! you cannot: Ye are men of peace:
Religion's self forbids. Lead then to torture.
Arvi. Now on my soul this youth doth move me much.
Cho. Think not religion and our holy office
Doth teach us tamely like the bleating lamb,
To crouch before oppression, and with neck

Outstretch'd await the stroke. Mistaken boy!
Did not strict justice claim thee for her victim,
We might full safely send thee to these Romans,
Inviting their hot charge. Know, when I blow
That sacred trumpet bound with sable fillets
To yonder branching oak, the awful sound
Calls forth a thousand Britons, train'd alike
In holy and in martial exercise,
Not by such mode and rule, as Romans use,
But of that fierce portentous horrible sort,
As shall appall ev'n Romans.
Eli. Gracious gods!
Then there are hopes indeed. O call them instant,
This prince will lead them on: I'll follow him,
Though in my chains, and some way dash them round
To harm the haughty foe.
Arvi. A thousand Britons,
And arm'd! O instant blow the sacred trump,
And let me head them. Yet methinks this youth——
Cho. I know what thou wouldst say, might join thee, prince.
True, were he free from crime, or had confest.
Eli. Confest! Ah, think not, I will e'er——
Arvi. Reflect.
Either thyself or brother must have wrong'd us:
Then why conceal——
Eli. Hast thou a brother? no!
Else hadst thou spar'd the word; and yet a sister
Lovely as thine might more than teach thee, prince,
What 'tis to have a brother. Hear me, druids!
Though I would prize an hour of freedom now
Before an age of any after date,
Though I would seize it as the gift of heav'n,
And use it as heav'n's gift, yet do not think,
I so will purchase it. Give it me freely,
I yet will spurn the boon, and hug my chains,
'Till you do swear by your own hoary heads,
My brother shall be safe.
Cho. Excellent youth!
Thy words do speak thy soul, and such a soul,
As wakes our wonder. Thou art free; thy brother
Shall be thine honour's pledge! so will we use him,
As thou art false or true.
Eli. I ask no other.
Arvi. Thus then, my fellow-soldier, to thy clasp
I give the hand of friendship. Noble youth,
We'll speed, or die together.
Cho. Hear us, prince!
Mona permits not, that he fight her battles,
'Till duly purified: For though his soul
Took up unwittingly this deed of baseness,
Yet is lustration meet. Learn, that in vice
There is a noisome rankness unperceiv'd
By gross corporeal sense, which so offends
Heaven's pure divinities, as us the stench
Of vapour wafted from sulphureous pool,
O pois'nous weed obscene. Hence doth [the man,
Who ev'n converses with a villain, need
As much purgation, as the pallid wretch
'Scap'd from the walls, where frowning Pestilence
Spreads wide her livid banners. For this cause,
Ye priests, conduct the youth to yonder grove,
And do the needful rites. Meanwhile ourself
Will lead thee, prince, unto thy father's presence.—
But hold, the king comes forth.
[*Exeunt priests with* ELIDURUS

CARACTACUS, ARVIRAGUS, CHORUS, EVELINA.

Car. My son, my son!
What joy, what transport, doth thine aged sire
Feel in these filial foldings! Speak not, boy,
Nor interrupt that heart-felt ecstacy
Should strike us mute. I know what thou wouldst say,
Yet prithee, peace. Thy sister's voice hath clear'd thee,
And could excuse find words at this blest moment,
Trust me, I'd give it vent. But, 'tis enough,
Thy father welcomes thee to him and honour;
Honour, that now with rapt'rous certainty
Calls thee his own true offspring. Dost thou weep?
Ah, if thy tears swell not from joy's free spring,
I beg thee, spare them: I have done thee wrong,
Can make thee no atonement: None, alas!
Thy father scarce can bless thee, as he ought;
Unblest himself, beset with foes around,
Bereft of queen, of kingdom, and of soldiers,
He can but give thee portion of his dangers,
Perchance and of his chains: Yet droop not, boy,
Virtue is still thine own.
Arvi. It is, my father,
Pure as from thine illustrious fount it came:
And that unsullied, let the world oppress us;
Let fraud and falsehood rivet fetters on us;
Still shall our souls be free: Yet hope is ours,
As well as virtue.
Car. Spoken like a Briton.
True, hope is ours, and therefore let's prepare:
The moments now are precious. Tell us, druid,
Is it not meet, we see the bands drawn out,
And mark their due array?
Cho. Monarch, ev'n now
They skirt the grove.
Car. Then let us to their front——
Cho. But is the traitor-youth in safety lodg'd?
Car. Druid, he fled——
Cho. O fatal flight to Mona!
Car. But what of that? Arviragus is here,
My son is here; let then the traitor go!
By this he has join'd the Romans: Let him join them!
A single arm, and that a villain's arm,
Can lend but little aid to any powers
Oppos'd to truth and virtue. Come, my son,
Let's to the troops, and marshal them with speed,
That done, we from these venerable men

Will claim their ready blessing: Then to battle;
And the swift sun, ev'n at his purple dawn,
Shall spy us crown'd with conquest, or with death.
[*Exeunt* CARACTACUS *and* ARVIRAGUS.

CHORUS, EVELINA.

Cho. What may his flight portend! Say, Evelina,
How came this youth to 'scape?
Evel. And that to tell
Will fix much blame on my impatient folly:
For, ere your hallow'd lips had given permission,
I flew with eager haste to bear my father
News of his son's return. Inflam'd with that,
Think, how a sister's zealous breast must glow!
Your looks give mild assent. I glow'd indeed
With the dear tale, and sped me in his ear
To pour the precious tidings: But my tongue
Scarce nam'd Arviragus, ere the false stranger
(As I bethink me since) with stealthy pace
Fled to the cavern's mouth.
Cho. The king pursued?
Evel. Alas! he mark'd him not, for 'twas the moment,
When he had all to ask and all to fear,
Touching my brother's valour. Hitherto
His safety only, which but little mov'd him,
Had reach'd his ears: But when my tongue unfolded
The story of his bravery and his peril,
O how the tears cours'd plenteous down his cheeks!
How did he lift unto the heav'ns his hands
In speechless transport! Yet he soon bethought him
Of Rome's invasion, and with fiery glance
Survey'd the cavern round; then snatch'd his spear,
And menac'd to pursue the flying traitor:
But I with prayers (O pardon, if they err'd)
Withheld his step, for to the left the youth
Had wing'd his way, where the thick underwood
Afforded sure retreat. Besides, if found,
Was age a match for youth?
Cho. Maiden, enough,
Better perchance for us, if he was captive:
But in the justice of their cause, and heav'n,
Do Mona's sons confide.

Bard, CHORUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA.

Bard. Druid, the rites
Are finish'd, all save that which crowns the rest,
And which pertains to thy blest hand alone:
For that he kneels before thee.
Cho. Take him hence,
We may not trust him forth to fight our cause.
Eli. Now by Andraste's throne——
Cho. Nay, swear not, youth,
The tie is broke, that held thy fealty:
Thy brother's fled.
Eli. Fled!
Cho. To the Romans fled.
Yes, thou hast cause to tremble.
Eli. Ah, Vellinus!
Does thus our love, does thus our friendship end!
Was I thy brother, youth, and hast thou left me!
Yes; and how left me, cruel, as thou art,
The victim of thy crimes!
Cho. True, thou must die.
Eli. I pray ye then on your best mercy, fathers,
It may be speedy. I would fain be dead,
If this be life. Yet I must doubt ev'n that,
For falsehood of this strange stupendous sort
Sets firm-ey'd Reason on a gaze, mistrusting,
That what she sees in palpable plain form,
The stars in yon blue arch, these woods, these caverns,
Are all mere tricks of cozenage, nothing real,
The vision of a vision. If he's fled,
I ought to hate this brother.
Cho. Yet thou dost not.
Eli. But when astonishment will give me leave,
Perchance I shall.—And yet he is my brother,
And he was virtuous once. Yes, ye vile Romans,
Yes, I must die, before my thirsty sword
Drinks one rich drop of vengeance. Yet, ye robbers,
Yet will I curse you with my dying lips:
'Twas you, that stole away my brother's virtue.
Cho. Now then prepare to die.
Eli. I am prepar'd.
Yet, since I cannot now (what most I wish'd)
By manly prowess guard this lovely maid:
Permit, that on your holiest earth I kneel,
And pour one fervent prayer for her protection.
Allow me this, for though you think me false,
The gods will hear me.
Evel. I can hold no longer!
O druid, druid, at thy feet I fall:
Yes, I must plead (away with virgin-blushes)
For such a youth must plead. I'll die to save him;
O take my life, and let him fight for Mona!
Cho. Virgin, arise. His virtue hath redeem'd him,
And he shall fight for thee and for his country.
Youth, thank us with thy deeds. The time is short,
And now with reverence take our high lustration:
Thrice do we sprinkle thee with day-break dew
Shook from the May-thorn blossom; twice and thrice
Touch we thy forehead with our holy wand:
Now thou art fully purg'd. Now rise restor'd
To virtue and to us. Hence then, my son,
Hie thee to yonder altar, where our Bards
Shall arm thee duly both with helm and sword
For warlike enterprise. [*Exit* ELI.

CARACTACUS, CHORUS, ARVIRAGUS, EVELINA.

Car. 'Tis true, my son,
Bold are their bearings, and I fear me not
But they have hearts will not belie their looks.
I like them well Yet would to righteous heav'n
Those valiant veterans, that on Snowdon guard
Their scanty pittance of bleak liberty,
Were here to join them; we would teach these wolves,

Though we permit their rage to prowl our coasts,
That vengeance waits them ere they rob our altars.
Hail, druid, hail! we find thy valiant guards
Accoutred so, as well bespeaks the wisdom
That fram'd their phalanx. We but wait thy blessing
To lead them 'gainst the foe.
Cho. Caractacus!
Behold this sword: The sword of old Belinus,
Stain'd with the blood of giants, and its name
Trifingus. Many an age its charmed blade
Has slept within yon consecrated trunk.
Lo, I unsheath it, king; I wave it o'er thee;
Mark, what portentous streams of scarlet light
Flow from the brandish'd falchion. On thy knee
Receive the sacred pledge.—And mark our words.
By the bright circle of the golden sun,
By the brief courses of the errant moon,
By the dread potency of every star
That studs the mystic zodiac's burning girth,
By each, and all of these supernal signs,
We do adjure thee, with this trusty blade,
To guard yon central oak, whose holiest stem
Involves the spirit of high Taranis:
This be thy charge; to which in aid we join
Ourselves, and our sage brethren. With our vassals
Thy son and the Brigantian prince shall make
Incursion on the foe.
Car. In this, and all,
Be ours observance meet. Yet surely, druid,
The fresh and active vigour of these youths
Might better suit with this important charge.
Not that my heart shrinks at the glorious task,
But will with ready zeal pour forth its blood
Upon the sacred roots, my firmest courage
Might fail to save. Yet, fathers, I am old;
And if I fell the foremost in the onset,
Should leave a son behind, might still defend you.
Cho. The sacred adjuration we have utter'd
May never be recall'd.
Car. Then be it so.
But do not think, I counsel this through fear:
Old as I am, I trust with half our powers
I could drive back these Romans to their ships;
Dastards, that come, as doth the cow'ring fowler,
To tangle me with snares, and take me tamely;
Slaves, they shall find, that ere they gain their prey,
They have to hunt it boldly with barb'd spears,
And meet such conflict, as the chafed boar
Gives to his stout assailants. O ye gods!
That I might instant face them.
Cho. Be thy son's
The onset.
Arvi. From his soul that son doth thank ye,
Blessing the wisdom, that preserves his father
Thus to the last. O if the fav'ring gods
Direct this arm, if their high will permit,
I pour a prosperous vengeance on the foe!
I ask for life no longer, than to crown
The valiant task. Steel then, ye powers of heav'n,
Steel my firm soul with your own fortitude,
Free from alloy of passion. Give me courage,
That knows not rage; revenge, that knows not malice;
Let me not thirst for carnage, but for conquest:
And conquest gained, sleep vengeance in my breast,
Ere in its sheath my sword.
Car. O hear his father!
If ever rashness spurr'd me on, great gods,
To acts of danger, thirsting for renown;
If ere my eager soul pursu'd its course
Beyond just reason's limit, visit not
My faults on him. I am the thing you made me,
Vindictive, bold, precipitate, and fierce:
But as you gave to him a milder mind,
O bless him, bless him with a milder fate!
Evel. Nor yet unheard let Evelina pour
Her pray'rs and tears. O hear a hapless maid,
That ev'n through half the years her life has number'd,
Ev'n nine long years, has dragg'd a trembling being,
Beset with pains and perils. Give her peace;
And, to endear it more, be that blest peace
Won by her brother's sword. O bless his arm,
And bless his valiant followers, one, and all.

ELIDURUS *entering, armed.*

Hear, heav'n! and let this pure and virgin prayer
Plead ev'n for Elidurus, whose sad soul
Cannot look up to your immortal thrones,
And urge his own request: Else would he ask,
That all the dangers of th' approaching fight
Might fall on him alone: That every spear
The Romans wield might at his breast be aim'd;
Each arrow darted on his rattling helm;
That so the brother of this beauteous maid,
Returning safe with victory and peace,
Might bear them to her bosom.
Cho. Now rise all,
And heav'n, that knows what most ye ought to ask,
Grant all ye ought to have! Behold, the stars
Are faded; universal darkness reigns.
Now is the dreadful hour, now will our torches
Glare with more livid horror, now our shrieks
And clanking arms will more appall the foe.
But heed, ye bards, that for the sign of onset
Ye sound the antientest of all your rhymes,
Whose birth tradition notes not, nor who fram'd
Its lofty strains: The force of that high air
Did Julius feel, when, fir'd by it, our fathers
First drove him recreant to his ships; and ill
Had far'd his second landing, but that fate
Silenc'd the master bard, who led the song.
Now forth, brave pair! Go, with our blessing go;
Mute be the march, as ye ascend the hill:
Then, when ye hear the sound of our shrill trumpet,
Fall on the foe.
Car. Now glory be thy guide!
Pride of my soul, go forth and conquer.
Evel. Brother,
Yet one embrace. O thou much honour'd stranger,
I charge thee fight by my dear brother's side,
And shield him from the foe; for he is brave,

And will with bold and well-directed arm
Return thy succour. [*Exeunt* ARVI. *and* ELI.
Cho. Now, ye priests, with speed
Strew on the altar's height your sacred leaves,
And light the morning flame. But why is this?
Why doth our brother Mador snatch his harp
From yonder bough? Why this way bend his step?
Car. He is entranc'd. The fillet bursts, that bound
His liberal locks; his snowy vestments fall
In ampler folds; and all his floating form
Doth seem to glisten with divinity!
Yet is he speechless. Say, thou chief of bards,
What is there in this airy vacancy,
That thou with fiery and irregular glance
Should scan thus wildly? Wherefore heaves thy breast?
Why starts——

ODE.

Cho. Hark! heard ye not yon footstep dread,
That shook the earth with thund'ring tread?
'Twas Death.—In haste
The warrior past;
High tower'd his helmed head:
I mark'd his mail, I mark'd his shield,
I spied the sparkling of his spear,
I saw his giant arm the falchion wield;
Wide wav'd the bick'ring blade, and fir'd the angry air.

On me (he cried) my Britons, wait,
To lead you to the field of fate
I come: Yon car,
That cleaves the air,
Descends to throne my state:
I mount your champion and your god.
My proud steeds neigh beneath the thong:
Hark! to my wheels of brass, that rattle loud!
Hark! to my clarion shrill, that brays the woods among!
[*Here one of the Druids blows the sacred trumpet.*

Fear not now the fever's fire,
Fear not now the death-bed groan,
Pangs that torture, pains that tire,
Bed-rid age with feeble moan:
These domestic terrors wait
Hourly at my palace gate;
And when o'er slothful realms my rod I wave,
These on the tyrant king and coward slave
Rush with vindictive rage, and drag them to their grave.

But ye, my sons, at this high hour
Shall share the fullness of my power:
From all your bows,
In levell'd rows,
My own dread shafts shall shower.
Go then to conquest, gladly go,
Deal forth my dole of destiny,
With all my fury dash the trembling foe
Down to those darksome dens, where Rome's pale spectres lie;
Where creeps the ninefold stream profound
Her black inexorable round,
And on the bank,
To willows dank,
The shivering ghosts are bound.
Twelve thousand crescents all shall swell
To full-orb'd pride, and fading die,
Ere they again in life's gay mansions dwell:
Not such the meed that crowns the sons of Liberty.

No, my Britons! battle-slain,
Rapture gilds your parting hour:
I, that all despotic reign,
Claim but there a moment's power.
Swift the soul of British flame
Animates some kindred frame,
Swiftly to life and light triumphant flies,
Exults again in martial extacies,
Again for freedom fights, again for freedom dies.

Car. It does, it does! unconquer'd, undismay'd,
The British soul revives—Champion, lead on,
I follow—give me way. Some blessed shaft
Will rid me of this clog of cumb'rous age;
And I again shall in some happier mould
Rise to redeem my country.
Cho. Stay thee, prince,
And mark what clear and amber-skirted clouds
Rise from the altar's verge, and cleave the skies:
O 'tis a prosperous omen! Soon expect
To hear glad tidings.
Car. I will send them to thee.
Cho. But see, a bard approaches, and he bears them:
Else is his eye no herald to his heart.

Bard, CHORUS, CARACTACUS.

Car. Speedily tell thy tale.
Bard. A tale like mine,
I trust your ears will willingly pursue
Through each glad circumstance. First, monarch, learn,
The Roman troop is fled.
Cho. Great gods, we thank ye!
Car. Fought they not ere they fled? O tell me all.
Bard. Silent, as night, that wrapt us in her veil,
We pac'd up yonder hill, whose woody ridge
O'erhung the ambush'd foe. No sound was heard
Step felt, or sight descry'd: for safely hid,
Beneath the purple pall of sacrifice
Did sleep our holy fire, nor saw the air,
'Till to that pass we came, where whilom Brute
Planted his five hoar altars. To our rites,
Then swift we hasted, and in one short moment
The rocky piles were cloth'd with livid flame.
Near each a white-rob'd druid, whose stern voice
Thunder'd deep execrations on the foe.
Now wak'd our horrid symphony, now all
Our harps terrific hang: meanwhile the grove
Trembled, the altars shook, and through our ranks

Our sacred sisters rush'd in sable robes,
With hair dishevell'd, and funereal brands
Hurl'd round with menacing fury. On they rush'd
In fierce and frantic mood, as is their wont
Amid the magic rites, they do to Night
In their deep dens below. Motions like these
Were never dared before in open air!

Cho. Did I not say, we had a power within us,
That might appal even Romans?

Bard. And it did.
They stood aghast, and to our vollied darts,
That thick as hail fell on their helms and corslets,
Scarce rais'd a warding shield. The sacred trumpet
Then rent the air, and instant at the signal
Rush'd down Arviragus with all our vassals;
A hot, but short-liv'd conflict then ensued:
For soon they fled. I saw the Romans fly,
Before I left the field.

Car. My son pursued!

Bard. The prince and Elidurus, like twin lions,
Did side by side engage. Death seem'd to guide
Their swords, no stroke fell fruitless, every wound
Gave him a victim.

Car. Thus, my friend Ebrancus,
Ill-fated prince! didst thou and I in youth
Unite our valours. In his prime he fell,
On Conway's banks I saw him fall, and slew
His murderer.—But how far did they pursue?

Bard. Even to the ships: for I descried the rout,
Far as the twilight gleam would aid my sight.

Car. Now, thanks to the bright star that rul'd his birth;
Yes, he will soon return to claim my blessing,
And he shall have it pour'd in tears of joy
On his bold breast! methought I heard a step:
Is it not his?

Bard. 'Tis some of our own train,
And, as I think, they lead six Romans captive.

CHORUS, CARACTACUS, *Captives.*

Cho. My brethren, bear the prisoners to the cavern,
'Till we demand them.

Car. Pause ye yet a while.
They seem of bold demeanour, and have helms,
That speak them leaders. Hear me, Romans, hear.
That you are captives, is the chance of war:
Yet captives as ye are, in Britain's eye
Ye are not slaves. Barbarians though ye call us,
We know the native rights, man claims from man;
And therefore never shall we gall your necks
With chains, or drag you at our scythed cars
In arrogance of triumph. Nor 'till taught
By Rome (what Britain sure should scorn to learn)
Her avarice, will we barter you for gold.
True, ye are captives, and our country's safety
Forbids, we give you back to liberty:
We give you therefore to the immortal gods,
To them we lift you in the radiant cloud
Of sacrifice. They may in limbs of freedom
Replace your free-born souls, and their high mercy
Haply shall to some better world advance you;
Or else in this restore that golden gift,
Which lost, leaves life a burden. Does there breathe
A wretch so 'pall'd with the vain fear of death
Can call this cruelty? 'tis love, 'tis mercy;
And grant, ye gods, if e'er I'm made a captive,
I meet the like fair treatment from the foe,
Whose stronger star quells mine. Now lead them on,
And, while they live, treat them, as men should men,
And not as Rome treats Britain.
[*Exeunt Captives.*
Druid, these,
Ev'n should their chief escape, may to the gods
In sacrifice—Whence was that shriek?

EVELINA, CARACTACUS, CHORUS.

Evel. My father,
Support me, take me trembling to your arms;
All is not well. Ah me, my fears o'ercome me!

Car. What means my child?

Evel. Alas, we are betray'd!
Ev'n now, as wand'ring in yon eastern grove,
I call'd the gods to aid us, the dread sound
Of many hasty steps did meet mine ear:
This way they prest.

Car. Daughter, thy fears are vain.

Evel. Methought I saw the flame of lighted brands,
And what did glitter to my dazzled sight,
Like swords and helms.

Car. All, all the feeble coinage
Of maiden fear.

Evel. Nay, if mine ear mistook not,
I heard the traitor's voice, who that way 'scap'd,
Calling to arms.

Car. Away with idle terrors!
Know, thy brave brother's helm is crown'd with conquest,
Our foes are fled, their leaders are our captives.
Smile, my lov'd child, and imitate the sun,
That rises ruddy from behind yon oaks
To hail him victor.

Cho. That the rising sun!
O horror! horror! sacrilegious fires
Devour our groves: They blaze, they blaze! O sound
The trump again! recall the prince, or all
Is lost.

Car. Druid, where is thy fortitude?
Do not I live? Is not this holy sword
Firm in my grasp? I will preserve your groves.
Britons, I go: Let those that dare die nobly,
Follow my step. [*Exit* CAR.

Evel. O whither does he go?
Return, return: Ye holy men, recall him.
What is his arm against a host of Romans?
O I have lost a father!

Cho. Ruthless gods!

Ye take away our souls: A general panic
Reigns through the grove. O fly, my brethren, fly,
To aid the king, fly to preserve your altars!
Alas! 'tis all in vain; our fate is fixed.
Look there, look there, thou miserable maid!
Behold thy bleeding brother.

ARVIRAGUS, ELIDURUS, EVELINA, CHORUS.

Arvi. Thanks, good youth!
Safe hast thou brought me to that holy spot,
Where I did wish to die. Support me still.
O, I am sick to death! Yet one step more:
Now lay me gently down. I would drag out
This life, though at some cost of throbs and pangs,
Just long enough to claim my father's blessing,
And sigh my last breath in my sister's arms.—
And here she kneels, poor maid! all dumb with grief.
Restrain thy sorrow, gentlest Evelina!
True, thou dost see me bleed: I bleed to death.
Evel. Say'st thou to death? O gods! the barbed shaft
Is buried in his breast. Yes, he must die;
And I, alas! am doom'd to see him die.
Where are your healing arts, medicinal herbs,
Ye holy men, your wonder-working spells?
Pluck me but out this shaft, stanch but this blood,
And I will call down blessings on your heads
With such a fervency—And can ye not!
Then let me beg you on my bended knee,
Give to my misery some opiate drug,
May shut up all my senses.—Yes, good fathers,
Mingle the potion so, that it may kill me,
Just at the instant this poor languisher
Heaves his last sigh.
Arvi. Talk not thus wildly, sister,
Think on our father's age——
Evel. Alas! my brother!
We have no father now; or, if we have,
He is a captive.
Arvi. Captive! O my wound!
It stings me now——But is it so?
[*Turning to the* CHORUS.
Cho. Alas!
We know no more, save that he sallied single
To meet the foe, whose unexpected host
Round by the east had wound their fraudful march,
And fired our groves.
Eli. O fatal, fatal valour!
Then is he seiz'd, or slain.
Arvi. Too sure he is!
Druid, not half the Romans met our swords;
We found the fraud too late: the rest are yonder.
Cho. How could they gain the pass?
Arvi. The wretch, that fled
That way, return'd, conducting half their powers;
And—But thy pardon, youth, I will not wound thee,
He is thy brother.
Eli. Thus my honest sword
Shall force the blood from the detested heart,
That holds alliance with him.
Arvi. Elidurus,
Hold, on our friendship, hold! Thou noble youth,
Look on this innocent maid. She must to Rome,
Captive to Rome. Thou seest warm life flow from me,
Ere long she'll have no brother. Heav'n's my witness,
I do not wish, that thou shouldst live the slave
Of Rome: But yet she is my sister.
Eli. Prince,
Thou urgest that, might make me drag an age
In fetters worse than Roman. I will live,
And while I live——

Enter Bard.

Fly to your caverns, druids,
The grove's beset around. The chief approaches.
Cho. Let him approach, we will confront his pride;
The seer that rules amid the groves of Mona
Has not to fear his fury. What though age
Slackens our sinews; what though shield and sword
Give not their iron aid to guard our body;
Yet virtue arms our soul, and 'gainst that panoply
What 'vails the rage of robbers? Let him come.
Arvi. I faint apace.—Ye venerable men,
If ye can save this body from pollution,
If ye can tomb me in this sacred place,
I trust ye will. I fought to save these groves,
And, fruitless though I fought, some grateful oak,
I trust, will spread its reverential gloom
O'er my pale ashes—Ah! that pang was death!
My sister, Oh!—— [*Dies.*
Eli. She faints! Ah raise her!——
Evel. Yes,
Now he is dead. I felt his spirit go
In a cold sigh, and, as it past, methought
It paus'd a while, and trembled on my lips!
Take me not from him: Breathless as he is,
He is my brother still, and if the gods
Do please to grace him with some happier being,
They ne'er can give to him a fonder sister.
Cho. Brethren, surround the corse, and, ere the foe
Approaches, chaunt with meet solemnity
That grateful dirge your dying champion claims.
Semicho. Lo, where incumbent o'er the shade
Rome's rav'ning eagle bows her beaked head!
Yet while a moment fate affords,
While yet a moment freedom stays,
That moment, which outweighs
Eternity's unmeasur'd hoards,
Shall Mona's grateful Bards employ
To hymn their godlike hero to the sky.
Semicho. Ring out, ye mortal strings;
Answer, thou heavenly harp, instinct with spirit all,
That o'er the jasper arch self-warbling swings
Of blest Andraste's throne:
Thy sacred sounds alone
Can celebrate the fall
Of bold Arviragus—

Enter AULUS DIDIUS *and Romans.*

Aulus. Ye bloody priests,
Behold we burst on your infernal rites,

And bid you pause. Instant restore our soldiers,
Nor hope that Superstition's ruthless step
Shall wade in Roman gore. Ye savage men,
Did not our laws give licence to all faiths,
We would o'erturn your altars, headlong heave
These shapeless symbols of your barbarous gods,
And let the golden sun into your caves.
Cho. Servant of Cæsar, has thine impious tongue
Spent the black venom of its blasphemy?
It has. Then take our curses on thine head,
Ev'n his fell curses, who doth reign in Mona,
Vicegerent of those gods thy pride insults.
Aulus. Bold priest, I scorn thy curses, and thyself.—
Soldiers, go search the caves, and free the prisoners.
Take heed, ye seize Caractacus alive.
Arrest yon youth; load him with heaviest irons,
He shall to Cæsar answer for his crime.
Eli. I stand prepar'd to triumph in my crime.
Aulus. 'Tis well, proud boy—Look to the beauteous maid, [*To the Soldiers.*
That tranc'd in grief, bends o'er yon bleeding corse;
Respect her sorrows.
Evel. Hence, ye barbarous men,
Ye shall not take him welt'ring thus in blood,
To shew at Rome, what British virtue was.
Avaunt! The breathless body that ye touch
Was once Arviragus!
Aulus. Fear us not, princess,
We reverence the dead.
Cho. Would too to heav'n,
Ye reverenc'd the gods but ev'n enough
Not to debase with slavery's cruel chain,
What they created free.
Aulus. The Romans fight
Not to enslave, but humanize the world.
Cho. Go to, we will not parley with thee, Roman:
Instant pronounce our doom.
Aulus. Hear it, and thank us.
This once our clemency shall spare your groves,
If at our call ye yield the British king:
Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Cæsar,
That each old oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,
Shall bow beneath our axes.
Cho. Be they blasted,
Whene'er their shade forgets to shelter virtue.

Enter Bard.

Mourn, Mona, mourn. Caractacus is captive!
And dost thou smile, false Roman? do not think
He fell an easy prey. Know, ere he yielded,
Thy bravest veterans bled. He too, thy spy,
The base Brigantian prince, hath seal'd his fraud
With death. Bursting through armed ranks, that hemm'd
The caitiff round, the brave Caractacus
Seiz'd his false throat; and as he gave him death
Indignant thunder'd, 'Thus is my last stroke,
'The stroke of justice.' Numbers then oppressed him:
I saw the slave, that cowardly behind
Pinion'd his arms; I saw the sacred sword
Writh'd from his grasp: I saw, what now ye see,
Inglorious sight! those barbarous bonds upon him.

CARACTACUS, AULUS DIDIUS, CHORUS, *&c.*

Car. Romans, methinks the malice of your tyrant
Might furnish heavier chains. Old as I am,
And wither'd as you see these war-worn limbs,
Trust me, they shall support the weightiest load
Injustice dares impose.——
Proud-crested soldier! [*To* DIDIUS.
Who seem'st the master-mover in this business,
Say, dost thou read less terror on my brow,
Than when thou met'st me in the fields of war
Heading my nations? No, my free-born soul
Has scorn still left to sparkle through these eyes,
And frown defiance on thee.—Is it thus! [*Seeing his son's body.*
Then I'm indeed a captive. Mighty gods!
My soul, my soul submits: Patient it bears
The pond'rous load of grief ye heap upon it.
Yes, it will grovel in this shatter'd breast,
And be the sad tame thing it ought to be,
Coopt in a servile body.
Aulus. Droop not, king.
When Claudius, the great master of the world,
Shall hear the noble story of thy valour,
His pity——
Car. Can a Roman pity, soldier?
And if he can, gods! must a Briton bear it?
Arviragus, my bold, my breathless boy,
Thou hast escap'd such pity; thou art free.
Here in high Mona shall thy noble limbs
Rest in a noble grave; posterity
Shall to thy tomb with annual reverence bring
Sepulchral stones, and pile them to the clouds:
Whilst mine——
Aulus. The morn doth hasten our departure.
Prepare thee, king, to go: A fav'ring gale
Now swells our sails.
Car. Inhuman, that thou art!
Dost thou deny a moment for a father
To shed a few warm tears o'er his dead son?
I tell thee, chief, this act might claim a life,
To do it duly; even a longer life,
Than sorrow ever suffer'd. Cruel man!
And thou deniest me moments. Be it so.
I know you Romans weep not for your children;
Ye triumph o'er your tears, and think it valour:
I triumph in my tears. Yes, best-lov'd boy,
Yes, I can weep, can fall upon thy corse,
And I can tear my hairs, these few grey hairs,
The only honours war and age have left me.
Ah son! thou might'st have rul'd o'er many nations,
As did thy royal ancestry: But I,
Rash that I was, ne'er knew the golden curb
Discretion hangs on brav'ry: Else perchance
These men, that fasten fetters on thy father,
Had sued to him for peace, and claim'd his friendship.

Aulus. But thou wast still implacable to Rome,
And scorn'd her friendship.
Car. [*Starting up from the body.*] Soldier, I had arms,
Had neighing steeds to whirl my iron cars,
Had wealth, dominion. Dost thou wonder, Roman,
I fought to save them? What if Cæsar aims,
To lord it universal o'er the world,
Shall the world tamely crouch at Cæsar's footstool?
Aulus. Read in thy fate our answer. Yet if sooner
Thy pride had yielded——
Car. Thank thy gods, I did not.
Had it been so, the glory of thy master,
Like my misfortunes, had been short and trivial,
Oblivion's ready prey: Now, after struggling
Nine years, and that right bravely, 'gainst a tyrant,
I am his slave to treat as seems him good;
If cruelly, 'twill be an easy task
To bow a wretch, alas! how bow'd already!
Down to the dust: If well, his clemency,
When trick'd and varnish'd by your glossing penmen,
Will shine in honour's annals, and adorn
Himself; it boots not me. Look there, look there,
The slave that shot that dart, kill'd ev'ry hope
Of lost Caractacus! Arise, my daughter.
Alas! poor prince; art thou too in vile fetters?
[*To* ELIDURUS.
Come hither, youth: Be thou to me a son,
To her a brother. Thus with trembling arms
I lead you forth; children, we go to Rome.
Weep'st thou, my girl? I prithee hoard thy tears
For the sad meeting of thy captive mother:
For we have much to tell her, much to say
Of these good men, who nurtur'd us in Mona;
Much of the fraud and malice, that pursu'd us;
Much of her son, who pour'd his precious blood
To save his sire and sister: Think'st thou, maid,
Her gentleness can hear the tale, and live?
And yet she must. O gods, I grow a talker!
Grief and old age are ever full of words:
But I'll be mute. Adieu! ye holy men;
Yet one look more—Now lead us hence for ever.
[*Exeunt.*

THE

GAMESTER.

BY

MOORE.

PROLOGUE.

BY GARRICK.

LIKE fam'd La Mancha's knight, who, lance in hand,
Mounted his steed to free th' enchanted land,
Our Quixote bard sets out a monster-taming,
Arm'd at all points, to fight that monster, Gaming.
Aloft on Pegasus he waves his pen,
And hurls defiance at the caitiff's den:
The first on fancied giants spent his rage,
But this has more than windmills to engage.
He combats passion rooted in the soul,
Whose powers at once delight ye, and controul;
Whose magic bondage each lost slave enjoys,
Nor wishes freedom, though the spell destroys.
To save our land from this magician's charms,
And rescue maids and matrons from his arms,
Our knight poetic comes—And, oh! ye fair
This black enchanter's wicked arts beware!
His subtle poison dims the brightest eyes,
And at his touch, each grace and beauty dies.
Love, gentleness, and joy, to rage give away,
And the soft dove becomes a bird of prey.
May this our bold advent'rer break the spell,
And drive the dæmon to his native hell.
Ye slaves of passion, and ye dupes of chance,
Wake all your powers from his destructive trance!
Shake off the shackles of this tyrant vice:
Hear other calls than those of cards and dice:
Be learn'd in nobler arts than arts of play,
And other debts than those of honour pay.
No longer live insensible to shame,
Lost to your country, families, and fame.
Could our romantic muse this work atchieve,
Would there one honest heart in Britain grieve?
Th' attempt, though wild, would not in vain be made,
If every honest hand would lend its aid.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

BEVERLEY, *the Gamester.*
LEWSON, *his friend.*
STUKELY, *a sharper.*
JARVIS, *Beverley's steward.*
BATES, DAWSON, } *accomplices of Stukely.*
Waiter, Bailiffs, &c.

WOMEN.

Mrs BEVERLEY, *wife to Beverley.*
CHARLOTTE, *his sister.*
LUCY, *maid to Mrs Beverley.*

SCENE,—*London.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. Be comforted, my dear; all may be well yet. And now, methinks, the lodging begins to look with another face. Oh, sister! sister! if these were all my hardships; if all I had to complain of were no more than quitting my house, servants, equipage, and shew, your pity would be weakness.

Char. Is poverty nothing, then?

Mrs Bev. Nothing in the world, if it affected only me. While we had a fortune, I was the happiest of the rich: and now it is gone, give me but a bare subsistence, and my husband's smiles, and I'll be the happiest of the poor. To me, now, these lodgings want nothing but their master. Why do you look at me?

Char. That I may hate my brother.

Mrs Bev. Do not talk so, Charlotte.

Char. Has he not undone you?——Oh, this pernicious vice of gaming! But, methinks his usual hours of four or five in the morning might have contented him; it was misery enough to wake for him till then. Need he have staid out all night?——I shall learn to detest him.

Mrs Bev. Not for the first fault. He never slept from me before.

Char. Slept from you! No, no, his nights have nothing to do with sleep. How has this one vice driven him from every virtue!——Nay, from his affections, too!——The time was, sister,——

Mrs Bev. And is. I have no fear of his affections. Would I knew, that he were safe!

Char. From ruin and his companions. But that is impossible. His poor little boy, too! What must become of him?

Mrs Bev. Why, want shall teach him industry. From his father's mistakes he shall learn prudence, and, from his mother's resignation, patience. Poverty has no such terrors in it as you imagine. There is no condition of life, sickness and pain excepted, where happiness is excluded. The husbandman, who rises early to his labour, enjoys more welcome rest at night for it. His bread is sweeter to him, his home happier, his family dearer, his enjoyments surer. The sun, that rouses him in the morning, sets in the evening to release him. All situations have their comforts, if sweet contentment dwell in the heart. But my poor Beverley has none. The thought of having ruined those, he loves, is misery for ever to him. Would I could ease his mind of that!

Char. If he alone were ruined, it were just he should be punished. He is my brother, it is true; but when I think of what he has done, of the fortune you brought him, of his own large estate too, squandered away upon this vilest of passions, and among the vilest of wretches! Oh, I have no patience! My own little fortune is untouched, he says. Would I were sure of it!

Mrs Bev. And so you may——it would be a sin to doubt it.

Char. I will be sure of it——it was madness in me to give it to his management. But I will demand it from him this morning. I have a melancholy occasion for it.

Mrs Bev. What occasion?

Char. To support a sister.

Mrs Bev. No; I have no need of it. Take it, and reward a lover with it. The generous Lewson deserves much more. Why won't you make him happy?

Char. Because my sister is miserable.

Mrs Bev. You must not think so. I have my jewels left yet. I will sell them to supply our wants; and, when all is gone, these hands shall toil for our support. The poor should be industrious—Why those tears, Charlotte?

Char. They flow in pity for you.

Mrs Bev. All may be well yet. When he has nothing to lose, I shall fetter him in these arms again; and then what is it to be poor?

Char. Cure him but of this destructive passion, and my uncle's death may retrieve all yet.

Mrs Bev. Ay, Charlotte, could we cure him! But the disease of play admits no cure but poverty; and the loss of another fortune would but increase his shame and affliction. Will Mr Lewson call this morning?

Char. He said so last night. He gave me hints too, that he had suspicions of our friend Stukely.

Mrs Bev. Not of treachery to my husband? That he loves play I know, but surely he is honest.

Char. He would fain be thought so; therefore I doubt him. Honesty needs no pains to set itself off.

Enter LUCY.

Mrs Bev. What now, Lucy?

Lucy. Your old steward, madam. I had not the heart to deny him admittance, the good old man begged so hard for it. [*Exit* LUCY.

Enter JARVIS.

Mrs Bev. Is this well, Jarvis? I desired you to avoid me.

Jar. Did you, madam? I am an old man, and had forgot. Perhaps, too, you forbad my tears; but I am old, madam, and age will be forgetful.

Mrs Bev. The faithful creature! how he moves me. [*To* CHARLOTTE.

Char. Not to have seen him had been cruelty.

Jar. I have forgot these apartments too. I remember none such in my young master's house; and yet I have lived in it these five and twenty years. His good father would not have dismissed me.

Mrs Bev. He ha'no reason, Jarvis.

Jar. I was faithful to him, while he lived; and when he died he bequeathed me to his son. I have been faithful to him, too.

Mrs Bev. I know it, I know it, Jarvis.

Char. We both know it.

Jar. I am an old man, madam, and have not a long time to live. I asked but to have died with him, and he dismissed me.

Mrs Bev. Prithee, no more of this! It was his poverty that dismissed you.

Jar. Is he indeed so poor, then?—Oh! he was the joy of my old heart——But must his creditors have all?—And have they sold his house too? His father built it, when he was but a prating boy. The times, that I have carried him in these arms! And, "Jarvis," says he, when a beggar has asked charity of me, "why should people be poor? You shan't be poor, Jarvis; if I were a king, nobody should be poor." Yet he is poor. And then he was so brave!——Oh, he was a brave little boy! And yet so merciful, he'd not have killed the gnat, that stung him.

Mrs Bev. Speak to him, Charlotte; for I cannot.

Char. When I have wiped my eyes.

Jar. I have a little money, madam; it might have been more, but I have loved the poor. All that I have is yours.

Mrs Bev. No, Jarvis; we have enough yet. I thank you, though, and will deserve your goodness.

Jar. But shall I see my master? And will he let me attend him in his distresses? I'll be no expence to him; and it will kill me to be refused. Where is he, madam?

Mrs Bev. Not at home, Jarvis. You shall see him another time.

Char. To-morrow, or the next day—Oh, Jarvis! what a change is here!

Jar. A change indeed, madam! my old heart aches at it. And yet, methinks——But here's somebody coming.

Enter LUCY *with* STUKELY.

Lucy. Mr Stukely, madam. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Good morning to you, ladies. Mr Jarvis, your servant. Where's my friend, madam? [*To Mrs* BEV.

Mrs Bev. I should have asked that question of you. Have you seen him to-day?

Stuke. No, madam.

Char. Nor last night?

Stuke. Last night! Did he not come home, then?

Mrs Bev. No. Were you not together?

Stuke. At the beginning of the evening; but not since. Where can he have staid?

Char. You call yourself his friend, sir; why do you encourage him in this madness of gaming?

Stuke. You have asked me that question before, madam; and I told you my concern was, that I could not save him. Mr Beverley is a man, madam; and, if the most friendly entreaties have no effect upon him, I have no other means. My purse has been his, even to the injury of my fortune. If that has been encouragement, I deserve censure; but I meant it to retrieve him.

Mrs Bev. I don't doubt it, sir; and I thank you—But where did you leave him last night?

Stuke. At Wilson's, madam, if I ought to tell; in company I did not like. Possibly he may be there still. Mr Jarvis knows the house, I believe.

Jar. Shall I go, madam?

Mrs Bev. No, he may take it ill.

Char. He may go as from himself.

Stuke. And, if he pleases, madam, without naming me. I am faulty myself, and should conceal the errors of a friend. But I can refuse nothing here. [*Bowing to the ladies.*

Jar. I would fain see him, methinks.

Mrs Bev. Do so, then; but take care how you upbraid him—I never upbraided him.

Jar. Would I could bring him comfort! [*Exit.*

Stuke. Don't be too much alarmed, madam. All men have their errors, and their times of seeing them. Perhaps, my friend's time is not come yet. But he has an uncle; and old men don't live for ever. You should look forward, madam; we are taught how to value a second fortune by the loss of a first.

[*Knocking at the door.*

Mrs Bev. Hark!——No—that knocking was too rude for Mr Beverley. Pray Heaven he be well!

Stuke. Never doubt it, madam. You shall be well, too.—Every thing shall be well.

[*Knocking again.*

Mrs Bev. The knocking is a little loud, though—Who waits there? Will none of you answer?—None of you, did I say? Alas, what was I thinking of! I had forgot myself.

Char. I'll go, sister—But don't be alarmed so. [*Exit.*

Stuke. What extraordinary accident have you to fear, madam?

Mrs Bev. I beg your pardon; but 'tis ever thus with me in Mr Beverley's absence. No one knocks at the door, but I fancy it is a messenger of ill news.

Stuke. You are too fearful, madam; 'twas but one night of absence; and if ill thoughts intrude (as love is always doubtful,) think of your worth and beauty, and drive them from your breast.

Mrs Bev. What thoughts! I have no thoughts, that wrong my husband.

Stuke. Such thoughts, indeed, would wrong him. The world is full of slander; and every wretch, that knows himself unjust, charges his neighbour with like passions; and by the general frailty hides his own——If you are wise, and would be happy, turn a deaf ear to such reports. It is ruin to believe them.

Mrs Bev. Ay, worse than ruin. It would be to sin against conviction. Why was it mentioned?

Stuke. To guard you against rumour. The sport of half mankind is mischief; and for a single error they make men devils. If their tales reach you, disbelieve them.

Mrs Bev. What tales? By whom? Why told?

I have heard nothing—or if I had, with all his errors, my Beverley's firm faith admits no doubt —It is my safety, my seat of rest and joy, while the storm threatens round me. I'll not forsake it. [STUKELY *sighs and looks down.*] Why turn you, sir, away? and, why that sigh?

Stuke. I was attentive, madam; and sighs will come we know not why. Perhaps, I have been too busy—If it should seem so, impute my zeal to friendship, that meant to guard you against evil tongues. Your Beverley is wronged, slandered most vilely—My life upon his truth.

Mrs Bev. And mine too. Who is it that doubts it? But no matter——I am prepared, sir ——Yet why this caution?——You are my husband's friend; I think you mine too; the common friend of both. [*Pauses.*] I had been unconcerned else.

Stuke. For Heaven's sake, madam, be so still! I mean to guard you against suspicion, not to alarm it.

Mrs Bev. Nor have you, sir. Who told you of suspicion? I have a heart it cannot reach.

Stuke. Then I am happy—I would say more; but am prevented.

Enter CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. Who was it, Charlotte?

Char. What a heart has that Jarvis! A creditor, sister. But the good old man has taken him away—'Don't distress his wife; don't distress his sister,' I could hear him say. 'It is cruel to distress the afflicted'——And when he saw me at the door, he begged pardon, that his friend had knocked so loud.

Stuke. I wish I had known of this. Was it a large demand, madam?

Char. I heard not that; but visits, such as these, we must expect often—Why so distressed, sister? This is no new affliction.

Mrs Bev. No, Charlotte; but I am faint with watching—quite sunk and spiritless—Will you excuse me, sir? I'll to my chamber, and try to rest a little. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Good thoughts go with you, madam. My bait is taken, then. [*Aside.*] Poor Mrs Beverley! How my heart grieves to see her thus!

Char. Cure her, and be a friend, then.

Stuke. How cure her, madam?

Char. Reclaim my brother.

Stuke. Ay, give him a new creation, or breathe another soul into him. I'll think on it, madam. Advice, I see, is thankless.

Char. Useless I am sure it is, if through mistaken friendship, or other motives, you feed his passion with your purse, and soothe it by example. Physicians, to cure fevers, keep from the patient's thirsty lip the cup, that would inflame him. You give it to his hands. [*A knocking.*] Hark, sir!—These are my brother's desperate symptoms——Another creditor.

Stuke. One not so easily got rid of—What, Lewson!

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Madam, your servant——Yours, sir. I was enquiring for you at your lodgings.

Stuke. This morning! You had business, then?

Lew. You'll call it by another name, perhaps. Where's Mr Beverley, madam?

Char. We have sent to enquire for him.

Lew. Is he abroad, then? He did not use to go out so early.

Char. No, nor stay out so late.

Lew. Is that the case? I am sorry for it.—But Mr Stukely, perhaps, may direct you to him.

Stuke. I have already, sir. But what was your business with me?

Lew. To congratulate you upon your late successes at play. Poor Beverley!—But you are his friend; and there's a comfort in having successful friends.

Stuke. And what am I to understand by this?

Lew. That Beverley's a poor man, with a rich friend; that's all.

Stuke. Your words would mean something, I suppose. Another time, sir, I shall desire an explanation.

Lew. And why not now? I am no dealer in long sentences. A minute or two will do for me.

Stuke. But not for me, sir. I am slow of apprehension, and must have time and privacy. A lady's presence engages my attention. Another morning I may be found at home.

Lew. Another morning, then, I'll wait upon you.

Stuke. I shall expect you, sir. Madam, your servant. [*Exit* STUKE.

Char. What mean you by this?

Lew. To hint to him, that I know him.

Char. How know him? Mere doubt and supposition!

Lew. I shall have proof soon.

Char. And what then? Would you risque your life to be his punisher!

Lew. My life, madam! Don't be afraid. And yet I am happy in your concern for me. But let it content you, that I know this Stukely——It will be as easy to make him honest as brave.

Char. And what do you intend to do?

Lew. Nothing, till I have proof. Yet my suspicions are well-grounded—But, methinks, madam, I am acting here without authority. Could I have leave to call Mr Beverley brother, his concerns would be my own. Why will you make my services appear officious?

Char. You know my reasons, and should not press me. But I am cold, you say; and cold I will be, while a poor sister's destitute——My heart bleeds for her; and, till I see her sorrows moderated, love has no joys for me.

Lew. Can I be less a friend by being a brother? I would not say an unkind thing—But the pillar of your house is shaken; prop it with another, and it shall stand firm again. You must comply.

Char. And will, when I have peace within my-

self. But let us change this subject—Your business here this morning is with my sister. Misfortunes press too hard upon her; yet, till today, she has borne them nobly.

Lew. Where is she?

Char. Gone to her chamber. Her spirits failed her.

Lew. I hear her coming. Let what has passed with Stukely be a secret—She has already too much to trouble her.

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY.

Mrs Bev. Good morning, sir; I heard your voice, and, as I thought, enquiring for me.—Where's Mr Stukely, Charlotte?

Char. This moment gone—You have been in tears, sister; but here's a friend shall comfort you.

Lew. Or, if I add to your distresses, I will beg your pardon, madam. The sale of your house and furniture was finished yesterday.

Mrs Bev. I know it, sir; I know too your generous reason for putting me in mind of it. But you have obliged me too much already.

Lew. There are trifles, madam, which I know you have set a value on; those I have purchased, and will deliver. I have a friend too, that esteems you——He has bought largely, and will call nothing his, till he has seen you. If a visit to him would not be painful, he has begged it may be this morning.

Mrs Bev. Not painful in the least. My pain is from the kindness of my friends. Why am I to be obliged beyond the power of return?

Lew. You shall repay us at your own time. I have a coach waiting at the door.—Shall we have your company, madam? [*To* CHAR.

Char. No; my brother may return soon; I'll stay and receive him.

Mrs Bev. He may want a comforter, perhaps. But dont upbraid him, Charlotte. We shall not be absent long. Come, sir, since I must be so obliged.

Lew. 'Tis I, that am obliged. An hour, or less, will be sufficient for us. We shall find you at home, madam?

[*To* CHAR. *and exit with Mrs* BEV.

Char. Certainly. I have but little inclination to appear abroad. Oh, this brother, this brother! to what wretchedness has he reduced us! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY.

Stuke. That Lewson suspects me 'tis too plain. Yet why should he suspect me? I appear the friend of Beverley as much as he. But I am rich, it seems; and so I am, thanks to another's folly, and my own wisdom. To what use is wisdom, but to take advantage of the weak? This Beverley's my fool; I cheat him, and he calls me friend. But more business must be done yet——His wife's jewels are unsold; so is the reversion of his uncle's estate: I must have these too. And then there's a treasure above all——I love his wife—Before she knew this Beverley I loved her; but, like a cringing fool, bowed at a distance, while he stepped in and won her——Never, never will I forgive him for it. My pride, as well as love, is wounded by this conquest. I must have vengeance. Those hints this morning were well thrown in——Already they have fastened on her. If jealousy should weaken her affections, want may corrupt her virtue——My heart rejoices in the hope——These jewels may do much——He shall demand them of her; which, when mine, shall be converted to special purposes——What now, Bates?

Enter BATES.

Bates. Is it a wonder, then, to see me? The forces are all in readiness, and only wait for orders. Where's Beverley?

Stuke. At last night's rendezvous, waiting for me. Is Dawson with you?

Bates. Dressed like a nobleman; with money in his pocket, and a set of dice, that shall deceive the devil.

Stuke. That fellow has a head to undo a nation; but for the rest, they are such low-mannered, ill-looking dogs, I wonder Beverley has not suspected them.

Bates. No matter for manners and looks. Do you supply them with money, and they are gentlemen by profession——The passion of gaming casts such a mist before the eyes, that the nobleman shall be surrounded with sharpers, and imagine himself in the best company.

Stuke. There's that Williams too! It was he, I suppose, that called at Beverley's with the note this morning. What directions did you give him?

Bates. To knock loud, and be clamorous. Did not you see him?

Stuke. No; the fool sneaked off with Jarvis. Had he appeared within doors, as directed, the note had been discharged. I waited there on purpose. I want the women to think well of me; for Lewson's grown suspicious; he told me so himself.

Bates. What answer did you make him?

Stuke. A short one——That I would see him soon, for farther explanation.

Bates. We must take care of him. But what have we to do with Beverley? Dawson and the rest are wondering at you.

Stuke. Why, let them wonder. I have designs above their narrow reach. They see me lend him money, and they stare at me. But they are fools. I want him to believe me beggared by him.

Bates. And what then?

Stuke. Ay, there's the question; but no matter; at night you may know more. He waits for me at Wilson's. I told the women where to find him.

Bates. To what purpose?

Stuke. To save suspicion. It looked friendly, and they thanked me. Old Jarvis was dispatched to him.

Bates. And may intreat him home——

Stuke. No; he expects money from me; but I'll have none. His wife's jewels must go——Women are easy creatures, and refuse nothing

where they love. Follow to Wilson's; but be sure he sees you not. You are a man of character, you know; of prudence and discretion.—Wait for me in an outer room; I shall have business for you presently. Come, sir,

Let drudging fools by honesty grow great;
The shorter road to riches is deceit. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Gaming House, with a Table, Box, Dice, &c.* BEVERLEY *discovered sitting.*

Bev. Why, what a world is this! The slave, that digs for gold, receives his daily pittance, and sleeps contented; while those, for whom he labours, convert their good to mischief, making abundance the means of want. Oh, shame, shame! Had fortune given me but a little, that little had been still my own. But plenty leads to waste; and shallow streams maintain their currents, while swelling rivers beat down their banks, and leave their channels empty. What had I to do with play? I wanted nothing. My wishes and my means were equal. The poor followed me with blessings, love scattered roses on my pillow, and morning waked me to delight—Oh, bitter thought, that leads to what I was by what I am! I would forget both—Who's there?

Enter a Waiter.

Wait. A gentleman, sir, enquires for you.

Bev. He might have used less ceremony.—Stukely, I suppose?

Wait. No, sir, a stranger.

Bev. Well, shew him in. [*Exit Waiter.* A messenger from Stukely, then; from him, that has undone me! Yet all in friendship——And now he lends me his little, to bring back fortune to me.

Enter JARVIS.

Jarvis! Why this intrusion? Your absence had been kinder.

Jar. I came in duty, sir. If it be troublesome——

Bev. It is——I would be private——hid even from myself. Who sent you hither?

Jar. One, that would persuade you home again. My mistress is not well; her tears told me so.

Bev. Go with thy duty there, then——But does she weep? I am to blame to let her weep. Pr'ythee begone: I have no business for thee.

Jar. Yes, sir; to lead you from this place. I am your servant still. Your prosperous fortune blessed my old age. If that has left you, I must not leave you.

Bev. Not leave me! Recall past time, then; or, through this sea of storms and darkness, shew me a star to guide me——But what canst thou?

Jar. The little that I can I will. You have been generous to me—I would not offend you, sir—but—

Bev. No. Think'st thou I would ruin thee too! I have enough of shame already——My wife, my wife! Wouldst thou believe it, Jarvis? I have not seen her all this long night——I, who have loved her so, that every hour of absence seemed as a gap in life. But other bonds have held me——Oh, I have played the boy! dropping my counters in the stream, and, reaching to redeem them, lost myself. Why wilt thou follow misery? Or if thou wilt, go to thy mistress: she has no guilt to sting her; and therefore may be comforted.

Jar. For pity's sake, sir!——I have no heart to see this change.

Bev. Nor I to bear it——How speaks the world of me, Jarvis?

Jar. As of a good man dead. Of one, who, walking in a dream, fell down a precipice. The world is sorry for you.

Bev. Ay, and pities me. Says it not so? But I was born to infamy——I'll tell thee what it says; it calls me villain! a treacherous husband, a cruel father, a false brother; one, lost to nature and her charities; or, to say all in one short word, it calls me—Gamester!——Go to thy mistress; I'll see her presently.

Jar. And why not now? Rude people press upon her; loud, bawling creditors; wretches, who know no pity—I met one at the door; he would have seen my mistress: I wanted means of present payment, so promised it to-morrow. But others may be pressing, and she has grief enough already. Your absence hangs too heavy on her.

Bev. Tell her I'll come then. I have a moment's business. But what hast thou to do with my distresses? Thy honesty has left thee poor; and age wants comfort——Keep what thou hast for cordials, lest between thee and the grave misery steal in. I have a friend shall counsel me——This is that friend.

Enter STUKELY.

Stuke. How fares it, Beverley? Honest Mr Jarvis, well met; I hoped to find you here. That viper, Williams! Was it not he that troubled you this morning?

Jar. My mistress heard him then?——I am sorry that she heard him.

Bev. And Jarvis promised payment.

Stuke. That must not be. Tell him I'll satisfy him.

Jar. Will you, sir? Heaven will reward you for it.

Bev. Generous Stukely! Friendship like yours,

had it ability like will, would more than balance the wrongs of fortune.

Stuke. You think too kindly of me——Make haste to Williams; his clamours may be rude else. [*To* Jarvis.

Jar. And my master will go home again—Alas! sir, we know of hearts there breaking for his absence. [*Exit.*

Bev. Would I were dead!

Stuke. Or turned hermit, counting a string of beads in a dark cave; or under a weeping willow, praying for mercy on the wicked. Ha, ha, ha!—Prithee, be a man, and leave dying to disease and old age. Fortune may be ours again; at least we'll try for it.

Bev. No; it has fooled us on too far.

Stuke. Ay, ruined us; and therefore we will sit down contented! These are the despondings of men without money; but let the shining ore chink in the pocket, and folly turns to wisdom. We are fortune's children——True, she is a fickle mother; but shall we droop because she is peevish?——No; she has smiles in store; and these her frowns are meant to brighten them.

Bev. Is this a time for levity? But you are single in the ruin, and therefore may talk lightly of it. With me it is complicated misery.

Stuke. You censure me unjustly——I but assumed these spirits to cheer my friend. Heaven knows he wants a comforter.

Bev. What new misfortune?

Stuke. I would have brought you money, but lenders want securities. What is to be done? All that was mine is yours already.

Bev. And there's the double weight, that sinks me. I have undone my friend too; one who, to save a drowning wretch, reached out his hand, and perished with him.

Stuke. Have better thoughts!

Bev. Whence are they to proceed? I have nothing left.

Stuke. [*Sighing.*] Then we are indeed undone. What, nothing? No moveables, nor useless trinkets? Baubles locked up in caskets to starve their owners? I have ventured deeply for you.

Bev. Therefore this heart-ache; for I am lost beyond all hope.

Stuke. No; means may be found to save us. Jarvis is rich. Who made him so? This is no time for ceremony.

Bev. And is it for dishonesty? The good old man! Shall I rob him too! My friend would grieve for it. No; let the little, that he has, buy food and clothing for him.

Stuke. Good morning, then. [*Going.*

Bev. So hasty! Why then, good morning.

Stuke. And when we meet again, upbraid me. Say it was I, that tempted you. Tell Lewson so; and tell him I have wronged you——He has suspicions of me, and will thank you.

Bev. No; we have been companions in a rash voyage, and the same storm has wrecked us both. Mine shall be self-upbraidings.

Stuke. And will they feed us? You deal unkindly by me. I have sold and borrowed for you, while land or credit lasted; and now, when fortune should be tried, and my heart whispers me success, I am deserted; turned loose to beggary, while you have hoards.

Bev. What hoards? Name them, and take them.

Stuke. Jewels.

Bev. And shall this thriftless hand seize them too? My poor, poor wife! Must she lose all? I would not wound her so.

Stuke. Nor I, but from necessity. One effort more, and fortune may grow kind. I have unusual hopes.

Bev. Think of some other means then.

Stuke. I have; and you rejected them.

Bev. Prithee, let me be a man.

Stuke. Ay, and your friend a poor one. But I have done. And for these trinkets of a woman, why, let her keep them to deck out pride with, and shew a laughing world, that she has finery to starve in.

Bev. No; she shall yield up all. My friend demands it. But need we have talked lightly of her? The jewels, that she values, are truth and innocence—Those will adorn her ever; and for the rest, she wore them for a husband's pride, and to his wants will give them. Alas! you know her not. Where shall we meet?

Stuke. No matter. I have changed my mind. Leave me to a prison; 'tis the reward of friendship.

Bev. Perish mankind first——Leave you to a prison! No; fallen as you see me, I am not that wretch. Nor would I change this heart, overcharged as it is with folly and misfortune, for one most prudent and most happy, if callous to a friend's distress.

Stuke. You are too warm.

Bev. In such a cause not to be warm is to be frozen. Farewell. I will meet you at your lodgings.

Stuke. Reflect a little. The jewels may be lost. Better not hazard them—I was too pressing.

Bev. And I ungrateful. Reflection takes up time. I have no leisure for it. Within an hour expect me. [*Exit.*

Stuke. The thoughtless shallow prodigal! We shall have sport at night, then—But hold—— The jewels are not ours yet—The lady may refuse them—The husband may relent too—It is more than probable—I will write a note to Beverley, and the contents shall spur him to demand them——But am I grown this rogue through avarice? No; I have warmer motives, love and revenge—Ruin the husband, and the wife's virtue may be bid for. It is of uncertain value, and sinks or rises in the purchase, as want, or wealth, or passion governs. The poor part cheaply with it; rich dames, though pleased with selling, will have high prices for it. Your love-sick girls give it for oaths and lying. But tender wives, who boast of honour and affections, keep it against fa-

mine—Why, let famine come, then! I am in haste to purchase.

Enter BATES.

Look to your men, Bates; there's money stirring. We meet to-night upon this spot. Hasten, and tell them so. Beverley calls upon me at my lodgings, and we return together. Hasten, I say; the rogues will scatter else.

Bates. Not till their leader bids them.

Stuke. Come on then. Give them the word, and follow me; I must advise with you—This is a day of business. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Char. Your looks are changed too; there is wildness in them. My wretched sister! How will it grieve her to see you thus!

Bev. No, no—a little rest will ease me. And for your Lewson's kindness to her, it has my thanks; I have no more to give him.

Char. Yes; a sister and her fortune. I trifle with him, and he complains—My looks, he says, are cold upon him. He thinks too—

Bev. That I have lost your fortune——He dares not think so.

Char. Nor does he—You are too quick at guessing. He cares not, if you had. That care is mine—I lent it you to husband, and now I claim it.

Bev. You have suspicions, then?

Char. Cure them, and give it me.

Bev. To stop a sister's chiding?

Char. To vindicate her brother.

Bev. How if he needs no vindication?

Char. I would fain hope so.

Bev. Ay, would and cannot. Leave it to time, then; 'twill satisfy all doubts.

Char. Mine are already satisfied.

Bev. 'Tis well. And when the subject is renewed, speak to me like a sister, and I will answer like a brother.

Char. To tell me I am a beggar. Why, tell it now. I that can bear the ruin of those dearer to me, the ruin of a sister and her infant, can bear that too.

Bev. No more of this—you wring my heart.

Char. Would that the misery were all your own! But innocence must suffer—Unthinking rioter! whose home was heaven to him; an angel dwelt there, and a little cherub, that crowned his days with blessings.—How he has lost this heaven to league with devils!

Bev. Forbear, I say; reproaches come too late; they search, but cure not. And for the fortune you demand, we'll talk to-morrow on it; our tempers may be milder.

Char. Or, if 'tis gone, why farewell all. I claimed it for a sister. She holds my heart in hers; and every pang she feels tears it in pieces—But I'll upbraid no more. What Heaven permits, perhaps, it may ordain; and sorrow then is sinful. Yet that the husband! father! brother! should be its instruments of vengeance!—'Tis grievous to know that.

Bev. If you are my sister, spare the remembrance—it wounds too deeply. To-morrow shall clear all; and when the worst is known, it may be better than your fears. Comfort my wife; and for the pains of absence I'll make atonement. The world may yet go well with us.

Char. See, where she comes!—Look chearfully upon her——Affections such as hers are prying, and lend those eyes, that read the soul.

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* LEWSON.

Mrs Bev. My life!

Bev. My love! how fares it? I have been a truant husband.

Mrs Bev. But we meet now, and that heals all—Doubts and alarms I have had; but in this dear embrace I bury and forgot them. My friend here [*pointing to* LEWSON] has been indeed a friend. Charlotte, it is you must thank him: your brother's thanks and mine are of too little value.

Bev. Yet what we have we'll pay. I thank you, sir, and am obliged. I would say more, but that your goodness to the wife upbraids the husband's follies. Had I been wise, she had not trespassed on your bounty.

Lew. Nor has she trespassed. The little I have done, acceptance overpays.

Char. So friendship thinks—

Mrs Bev. And doubles obligations by striving to conceal them——We'll talk another time on it—You are too thoughtful, love.

Bev. No, I have reason for these thoughts.

Char. And hatred for the cause—Would you had that too!

Bev. I have—The cause was avarice.

Char. And who the tempter?

Bev. A ruined friend—ruined by too much kindness.

Lew. Ay, worse than ruined; stabbed in his fame, mortally stabbed—riches cannot cure him.

Bev. Or if they could, those I have drained him of. Something of this he hinted in the morning—that Lewson had suspicions of him—Why these suspicions? [*Angrily.*

Lew. At school we knew this Stukely. A cunning, plodding, boy he was, sordid and cruel, slow at his task, but quick at shifts and tricking. He schemed out mischief, that others might be punished; and would tell his tale with so much art, that for the lash he merited, rewards and praise were given him. Shew me a boy with such a mind, and time, that ripens manhood in him, shall ripen vice too—I will prove him, and lay him open to you——Till then be warned—I know him, and therefore shun him.

Bev. As I would those, that wrong him.—You are too busy, sir.

Mrs Bev. No, not too busy—Mistaken, perhaps—That had been milder.

Lew. No matter, madam. I can bear this, and praise the heart that prompts it—Pity such friendship should be so placed!

Bev. Again, sir! But I'll bear too——You wrong him, Lewson, and will be sorry for it.

Char. Ay, when 'tis proved he wrongs him. The world is full of hypocrites.

Bev. And Stukely one—so you would infer, I think.——I will hear no more of this—my heart aches for him—I have undone him.

Lew. The world says otherwise.

Bev. The world is false then——I have business with you, love. [*To Mrs* BEV.] We'll leave them to their rancour. [*Going.*

Char. No; we shall find room within for it—Come this way, sir. [*To* LEW.

Lew. Another time my friend will thank me; that time is hastening too.

[*Exeunt* LEW. *and* CHAR.

Bev. They hurt me beyond bearing——Is Stukely false? Then honesty has left us! 'Twere sinning against Heaven to think so.

Mrs Bev. I never doubted him.

Bev. No; you are charity. Meekness and ever-during patience live in that heart, and love that knows no change.—Why did I ruin you?

Mrs Bev. You have not ruined me. I have no wants, when you are present, nor wishes in your absence but to be blest with your return. Be but resigned to what has happened, and I am rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Bev. My generous girl!——But memory will be busy; still crowding on my thoughts, to sour the present by the past. I have another pang too.

Mrs Bev. Tell it, and let me cure it.

Bev. That friend—that generous friend, whose fame they have traduced——I have undone him too. While he had means he lent me largely; and now a prison must be his portion.

Mrs Bev. No; I hope otherwise.

Bev. To hope must be to act. The charitable wish feeds not the hungry—Something must be done.

Mrs Bev. What?

Bev. In bitterness of heart he told me, just now he told me, I had undone him. Could I hear that, and think of happiness? No! I have disclaimed it, while he is miserable.

Mrs Bev. The world may mend with us, and then we may be grateful. There's comfort in that hope.

Bev. Ay; it is the sick man's cordial, his promised cure; while in preparing it the patient dies.—What now?

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. A letter, sir. [*Delivers it, and exit.*

Bev. The hand is Stukely's.

[*Opens it, and reads it to himself.*

Mrs Bev. And brings good news—at least I will hope so—What says he, love?

Bev. Why this—too much for patience. Yet he directs me to conceal it from you. [*Reads.*]

'Let your haste to see me be the only proof of 'your esteem for me. I have determined, since 'we parted, to bid adieu to England; chusing ra-'ther to forsake my country, than owe my free-'dom in it to the means we talked of. Keep this 'a secret at home, and hasten to the ruined

R. STUKELY.'

Ruined by friendship!——I must relieve or follow him.

Mrs Bev. Follow him, did you say? Then I am lost indeed!

Bev. O this infernal vice! how has it sunk me! A vice, whose highest joy was poor to my domestic happiness. Yet how have I pursued it! turned all my comforts to bitterest pangs, and all my smiles to tears. Damned, damned infatuation!

Mrs Bev. Be cool, my life! What are the means the letter talks of? Have you—have I those means? Tell me, and ease me. I have no life while you are wretched.

Bev. No, no: it must not be. 'Tis I alone have sinned; 'tis I alone must suffer. You shall reserve those means to keep my child, and his wronged mother, from want and wretchedness.

Mrs Bev. What means?

Bev. I came to rob you of them—but cannot, dare not—Those jewels are your sole support—I should be more than monster to request them.

Mrs Bev. My jewels! Trifles, not worth the speaking of, if weighed against a husband's peace; let them but purchase that, and the world's wealth is of less value.

Bev. Amazing goodness! How little do I seem before such virtue!

Mrs Bev. No more, my love. I kept them till occasion called to use them; now is the occasion, and I will resign them cheerfully.

Bev. Why we will be rich in love then. But this excess of kindness melts me. Yet for a friend one would do much—He has denied me nothing.

Mrs Bev. Come to my closet—But let him manage wisely. We have no more to give him.

Bev. Where learnt my love this excellence! 'Tis Heaven's own teaching: that Heaven, which to an angel's form has given a mind more lovely. I am unworthy of you, but will deserve you better.

Henceforth my follies and neglects shall cease,
And all to come be penitence and peace;
Vice shall no more attract me with her charms,
Nor pleasure reach me, but in these dear arms.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Stukely's Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* BATES.

Stuke. So runs the world, Bates. Fools are the natural prey of knaves; nature designed them so, when she made lambs for wolves. The laws, that fear and policy have framed, nature disclaims: she knows but two, and those are force and cunning. The nobler law is force; but then there's danger in it: while cunning, like a skilful miner, works safely and unseen.

Bates. And therefore wisely. Force must have nerves and sinews; cunning wants neither. The dwarf that has it shall trip the giant's heels up.

Stuke. And bind him to the ground. Why, we will erect a shrine for nature, and be her oracles. Conscience is weakness; fear made it, and fear maintains it. The dread of shame, inward reproaches, and fictitious burnings swell out the phantom. Nature knows none of this; her laws are freedom.

Bates. Sound doctrine, and well delivered!

Stuke. We are sincere, too, and practise what we teach. Let the grave pedant say as much. But now to business—the jewels are disposed of, and Beverley again worth money. He waits to count his gold out, and then comes hither. If my design succeeds, this night we finish with him—go to your lodgings, and be busy—You understand conveyances, and make ruin sure.

Bates. Better stop here. The sale of this reversion may be talked of—there's danger in it.

Stuke. No; 'tis the mark I aim at. We will thrive and laugh. You are the purchaser, and there's the payment. [*Giving a pocket book.*]—He thinks you rich; and so you shall be. Enquire for titles, and deal hardly; 'twill look like honesty.

Bates. How if he suspects us?

Stuke. Leave it to me. I study hearts, and when to work upon them. Go to your lodgings; and if we come, be busy over papers. Talk of a thoughtless age, of gaming and extravagance; you have a face for it.

Bates. A feeling, too, that would avoid it. We push too far; but I have cautioned you. If it ends ill, you will think of me; and so, adieu.

[*Exit.*

Stuke. This fellow sins by halves; his fears are conscience to him. I will turn these fears to use. Rogues, that dread shame, will still be greater rogues to hide their guilt—this shall be thought of. Lewson grows troublesome—we must get rid of him—he knows too much. I have a tale for Beverley; part of it truth, too—he shall call Lewson to account—if it succeeds, 'tis well; if not, we must try other means—but here he comes—I must dissemble.

Enter BEVERLEY.

Look to the door there! [*In a seeming fright.*]—My friend! I thought of other visitors.

Bev. No; these shall guard you from them [*Offering notes.*] Take them, and use them cautiously—The world deals hardly by us.

Stuke. And shall I leave you destitute? No: your wants are the greatest. Another climate may treat me kinder. The shelter of to-night takes me from this.

Bev. Let these be your support, then—yet is there need of parting? I may have means again; we will share them, and live wisely.

Stuke. No: I should tempt you on. Habit is nature in me: ruin cannot cure it. Even now I would be gaming. Taught by experience as I am, and knowing this poor sum is all that is left us, I am for venturing still—and say I am to blame—yet will this little supply our wants? No, we must put it out to usury. Whether 'tis madness in me, or some restless impulse of good fortune, I yet am ignorant; but—

Bev. Take it, and succeed then. I will try no more.

Stuke. 'Tis surely impulse; it pleads so strongly—but you are cold—we will even part here, then. And for this last reserve, keep it for better uses; I will have none of it. I thank you, though, and will seek fortune singly: one thing I had forgot—

Bev. What is it?

Stuke. Perhaps, 'twere best forgotten. But I am open in my nature, and zealous for the honour of my friend——Lewson speaks freely of you.

Bev. Of you, I know, he does.

Stuke. I can forgive him for it; but, for my friend I am angry.

Bev. What says he of me?

Stuke. That Charlotte's fortune is embezzled—he talks of it loudly.

Bev. He shall be silenced, then—how heard you of it?

Stuke. From many. He questioned Bates about it. You must account with him he says.

Bev. Or he with me—and soon, too.

Stuke. Speak mildly to him. Cautions are best.

Bev. I will think on it—but whither go you?

Stuke. From poverty and prisons—no matter whither. If fortune changes, you may hear from me.

Bev. May these be prosperous, then. [*Offering the notes, which he refuses.*] Nay, they are yours—I have sworn it, and will have nothing—take them and use them.

Stuke. Singly, I will not—my cares are for my

friend; for his lost fortune and ruined family.—All separate interests I disclaim. Together we have fallen; together we must rise. My heart, my honour, and affections, all will have it so.

Bev. I am weary of being fooled.

Stuke. And so am I—here let us part, then—these bodings of good fortune shall all be stifled; call them folly, and forget them—this one embrace, and then farewell. [*Offering to embrace.*

Bev. No; stay a moment—how my poor heart's distracted! I have these bodings too; but whether caught from you, or prompted by my good or evil genius, I know not—the trial shall determine—and yet, my wife!

Stuke. Ay, ay, she will chide.

Bev. No; my chidings are all here.

[*Pointing to his heart.*

Stuke. I will not persuade you.

Bev. I am persuaded; by reason too; the strongest reason—necessity. Oh, could I but regain the height I've fallen from! Heaven should forsake me in my latest hour, if I again mixed in these scenes, or sacrificed the husband's peace, his joy and best affections, to avarice and infamy.

Stuke. I have resolved like you; and since our motives are so honest, why should we fear success?

Bev. Come on, then—where shall we meet?

Stuke. At Wilson's—yet if it hurts you, leave me: I have misled you often.

Bev. We have misled each other—but come! Fortune is fickle, and may be tired with plaguing us—there let us rest our hopes.

Stuke. Yet think a little—

Bev. I cannot—thinking but distracts me.
When desperation leads, all thoughts are vain;
Reason would lose what rashness may obtain.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs Beverley *and* Charlotte.

Char. 'Twas all a scheme, a mean one; unworthy of my brother.

Mrs Bev. No; I am sure it was not—Stukely is honest too; I know he is—this madness has undone them both.

Char. My brother's irrecoverable—you are too spiritless a wife—a mournful tale, mixed with a few kind words, will steal away your soul. The world's too subtle for such goodness. Had I been by, he should have asked your life sooner than those jewels.

Mrs Bev. He should have had it then. [*Warmly.*] I live but to oblige him. She, who can love, and is beloved like me, will do as much.—Men have done more for mistresses, and women for a base deluder: and shall a wife do less? Your chidings hurt me, Charlotte.

Char. And come too late; they might have saved you else. How could he use you so?

Mrs Bev. 'Twas friendship did it. His heart was breaking for a friend.

Char. The friend that has betrayed him.

Mrs Bev. Pr'ythee do not think so.

Char. To-morrow he accounts with me.

Mrs Bev. And fairly—I will not doubt it.

Char. Unless a friend has wanted—I have no patience—Sister! sister! we are bound to curse this friend!

Mrs Bev. My Beverley speaks nobly of him.

Char. And Lewson truly.——But I displease you with this talk.——To-morrow will instruct us.

Mrs Bev. Stay till it comes then—I would not think so hardly.

Char. Nor I, but from conviction—Yet we have hope of better days. My uncle is infirm, and of an age that threatens hourly—Or, if he lives, you never have offended him; and for distresses so unmerited he will have pity.

Mrs Bev. I know it, and am cheerful. We have no more to lose; and for what's gone, if it brings prudence home, the purchase was well made.

Char. My Lewson will be kind too. While he and I have life and means, you shall divide with us—And see, he's here.

Enter Lewson.

We were just speaking of you.

Lew. 'Tis best to interrupt you then. Few characters will bear a scrutiny; and where the bad outweighs the good, he is safest that is least talked of. What say you, madam?

[*To* Charlotte.

Char. That I hate scandal, though a woman—therefore talk seldom of you.

Mrs Bev. Or, with more truth, that though a woman, she loves to praise—therefore talks always of you. I'll leave you to decide it. [*Exit.*

Lew. How good and amiable! I came to talk in private with you; of matters that concern you.

Char. What matters?

Lew. First answer me sincerely to what I ask.

Char. I will—But you alarm me.

Lew. I am too grave, perhaps; but be assured of this, I have no news that troubles me, and therefore should not you.

Char. I am easy, then—propose your question.

Lew. It is now a tedious twelvemonth, since, with an open and kind heart, you said you loved me.

Char. So tedious, did you say?

Lew. And when, in consequence of such sweet words, I pressed for marriage, you gave a voluntary promise, that you would live for me.

Char. You think me changed, then? [*Angrily.*

Lew. I did not say so. A thousand times I have pressed for the performance of this promise: but private cares, a brother's and a sister's ruin, were reasons for delaying it.

Char. I had no other reasons.—Where will this end?

Lew. It shall end presently.

Char. Go on, sir.

Lew. A promise, such as this, given freely, not extorted, the world thinks binding; but I think otherwise.

Char. And would release me from it?

Lew. You are too impatient, madam.

Char. Cool, sir—quite cool—Pray go on.

Lew. Time, and a near acquaintance with my faults, may have brought change—if it be so, or for a moment, if you have wished this promise were unmade, here I acquit you of it——This is my question, then; and with such plainness as I ask it, I shall entreat an answer. Have you repented of this promise?

Char. Stay, sir. The man, that can suspect me, shall find me changed—Why am I doubted?

Lew. My doubts are of myself. I have my faults, and you have observation. If from my temper, my words, or actions, you have conceived a thought against me, or even a wish for separation, all that has passed is nothing.

Char. You startle me—But tell me—I must be answered first. Is it from honour you speak this? Or do you wish me changed?

Lew. Heaven knows I do not. Life and my Charlotte are so connected, that to lose one, were loss of both. Yet for a promise, though given in love, and meant for binding; if time or accident, or reason should change opinion—with me that promise has no force.

Char. Why, now I'll answer you. Your doubts are prophecies——I am really changed.

Lew. Indeed!

Char. I could torment you now, as you have me; but it is not in my nature. That I am changed, I own: for what at first was inclination is now grown reason in me; and from that reason, had I the world—nay, were I poorer than the poorest, and you too wanting bread, with but a hovel to invite me to——I would be yours, and happy.

Lew. My kindest Charlotte! [*Taking her hand.*] Thanks are too poor for this—and words too weak! But if we love so, why should our union be delayed?

Char. For happier times. The present are too wretched.

Lew. I may have reasons, that press it now.

Char. What reasons?

Lew. The strongest reasons; unanswerable ones.

Char. Be quick and name them.

Lew. No, madam; I am bound in honour to make conditions first——I am bound by inclination too. This sweet profusion of kind words pains, while it pleases. I dread the losing you.

Char. Astonishment! what mean you?

Lew. First promise, that to-morrow, or the next day, you will be mine for ever.

Char. I do—though misery should succeed.

Lew. Thus, then, I seize you! And with you every joy on this side Heaven!

Char. And thus I seal my promise. [*Embracing him.*] Now, sir, your secret.

Lew. Your fortune's lost.

Char. My fortune's lost! I'll study to be humble, then. But was my promise claimed for this? How nobly generous! Where learned you this sad news?

Lew. From Bates, Stukely's prime agent. I have obliged him, and he's grateful—He told it me in friendship, to warn me from my Charlotte.

Char. 'Twas honest in him, and I'll esteem him for it.

Lew. He knows much more than he has told.

Char. For me it is enough. And for your generous love, I thank you from my soul. If you would oblige me more, give me a little time.

Lew. Why time? It robs us of our happiness.

Char. I have a task to learn first. The little pride this fortune gave me must be subdued.—Once we were equal; and might have met obliging and obliged. But now it is otherwise; and for a life of obligations, I have not learned to bear it.

Lew. Mine is that life. You are too noble.

Char. Leave me to think on it.

Lew. To-morrow, then, you will fix my happiness?

Char. All that I can, I will.

Lew. It must be so; we live but for each other. Keep what you know a secret; and when we meet to-morrow, more may be known. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Char. My poor, poor sister! how would this wound her! But I will conceal it, and speak comfort to her. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to a Room in a Gaming House.*

Enter BEVERLEY *and* STUKELY.

Bev. Whither would you lead me? [*Distractedly.*

Stuke. Where we may vent our curses.

Bev. Ay, on yourself, and those damned counsels, that have destroyed me. A thousand fiends were in that bosom, and let all loose to tempt me—I had resisted else.

Stuke. Go on, sir—I have deserved this from you.

Bev. And curses everlasting—Time is too scanty for them—

Stuke. What have I done?

Bev. What the arch-devil of old did—soothed with false hopes for certain ruin.

Stuke. Myself unhurt; nay, pleased at your destruction—So your words mean. Why, tell it to the world. I am too poor to find a friend in it.

Bev. A friend! What's he? I had a friend.

Stuke. And have one still.

Bev. Ay; I'll tell you of this friend. He found me happiest of the happy. Fortune and honour crowned me; and love and peace lived in my heart. One spark of folly lurked there;—that too he found; and by deceitful breath blew into flames, that have consumed me. This friend were you to me.

Stuke. A little more, perhaps—The friend, who gave his all to save you; and, not succeed-

ing, chose ruin with you. But no matter, I have undone you, and am a villain.

Bev. No; I think not——The villains are within.

Stuke. What villains?

Bev. Dawson and the rest—We have been dupes to sharpers.

Stuke. How know you this? I have had doubts as well as you; yet still as fortune changed I blushed at my own thoughts. But you have proof, perhaps.

Bev. Ay, damned ones. Repeated losses—Night after night, and no reverse—Chance has no hand in this.

Stuke. I think more charitably; yet I am peevish in my nature, and apt to doubt—The world speaks fairly of this Dawson, so it does of the rest. We have watched them closely too. But 'tis a right usurped by losers, to think the winners knaves.—We will have more manhood in us.

Bev. I know not what to think. This night has stung me to the quick—Blasted my reputation too—I have bound my honour to these vipers; played meanly upon credit, 'till I tired them; and now they shun me to rifle one another. What is to be done?

Stuke. Nothing. My counsels have been fatal.

Bev. By Heaven I'll not survive this shame—Traitor! 'tis you have brought it on me. [*Taking hold of him.*] Shew me the means to save me, or I'll commit a murder here, and next upon myself!

Stuke. Why do it then, and rid me of ingratitude.

Bev. Prithee forgive this language—I speak I know not what—Rage and despair are in my heart, and hurry me to madness. My home is horror to me—I'll not return to it. Speak quickly; tell me, if, in this wreck of fortune, one hope remains? Name it, and be my oracle.

Stuke. To vent your curses on—You have bestowed them liberally. Take your own counsel; and should a desperate hope present itself, it will suit your desperate fortune. I'll not advise you.

Bev. What hope? By Heaven I'll catch at it, however desperate. I am so sunk in misery, it cannot lay me lower.

Stuke. You have an uncle.

Bev. Ay, what of him?

Stuke. Old men live long by temperance;—while their heirs starve on expectation.

Bev. What mean you?

Stuke. That the reversion of his estate is yours, and will bring money to pay debts with; Nay, more, it may retrieve what's past.

Bev. Or leave my child a beggar.

Stuke. And what is his father! a dishonourable one; engaged for sums he cannot pay—That should be thought of.

Bev. It is my shame—the poison, that inflames me. Where shall we go? To whom? I am impatient till all is lost.

Stuke. All may be yours again—Your man is Bates—He has large funds at his command, and will deal justly by you.

Bev. I am resolved—Tell them within we will meet them presently; and with full purses, too ——Come, follow me.

Stuke. No. I have no hand in this; nor do I counsel it—Use your discretion, and act from that. You will find me at my lodgings.

Bev. Succeed what will, this night I'll dare the worst;
'Tis loss of fear to be completely cursed.
[*Exit.*

Stuke. Why, lose it then for ever.——Fear is the mind's worst evil; and 'tis a friendly office to drive it from the bosom. Thus far has fortune crowned me—Yet Beverley is rich; rich in his wife's best treasure—her honour and affections. I would supplant him there too. But it is the curse of thinking minds to raise up difficultics. Fools only conquer women. Fearless of dangers, which they see not, they press on boldly, and, by persisting, prosper. Yet may a tale of art do much—Charlotte is sometimes absent. The seeds of jealousy are sown already. If I mistake not, they have taken root too. Now is the time to ripen them, and reap the harvest. The softest of her sex, if wronged in love, or thinking that she's wronged, becomes a tygress in revenge.—I'll instantly to Beverley's—No matter for danger.—When beauty leads us on, it is indiscretion to reflect, and cowardice to doubt. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* LUCY.

Mrs Bev. Did Charlotte tell you any thing?

Lucy. No, madam.

Mrs Bev. She looked confused, methought; said she had business with her Lewson; which, when I pressed to know, tears only were her answer.

Lucy. She seemed in haste, too—Yet her return may bring you comfort.

Mrs Bev. No, my kind girl, I was not born for it. But why do I distress thee? Thy sympathizing heart bleeds for the ills of others.—What pity, that thy mistress cannot reward thee! But there is a Power above, that sees, and will remember all. [*Knocking.*] Prithee soothe me with the song thou sung'st last night. It suits this change of fortune; and there is a melancholy in it that pleases me.

Lucy. I fear it hurts you, madam. Your goodness, too, draws tears from me. But I will dry them, and obey you.

SONG.

When Damon languished at my feet,
And I believed him true,
The moments of delight how sweet!
But, ah! how swift they flew!
The sunny hill, the flowery vale,
The garden and the grove,

Have echoed to his ardent talk,
And vows of endless love.

The conquest gained, he left his prize,
He left her to complain,
To talk of joy with weeping eyes,
And measure time by pain.
But Heaven will take the mourner's part,
In pity to despair;
And the last sigh, that rends the heart,
Shall waft the spirit there.

Mrs Bev. I thank thee, Lucy; I thank Heaven too, my griefs are none of these. Yet Stukely deals in hints; he talks of rumours; I will urge him to speak plainly.——Hark! there is some one entering.

Lucy. Perhaps it is my master, madam. [*Exit.*

Mrs Bev. Let him be well too, and I am satisfied. [*Goes to the door and listens.*] No, it is another's voice; his had been music to me. Who is it, Lucy?

Re-enter Lucy *with* Stukely.

Lucy. Mr Stukely, madam. [*Exit.*

Stuke. To meet you thus alone, madam, was what I wished. Unseasonable visits, when friendship warrants them, need no excuse; therefore I make none.

Mrs Bev. What mean you, sir? And where is your friend?

Stuke. Men may have secrets, madam, which their best friends are not admitted to. We parted in the morning not soon to meet again.

Mrs Bev. You mean to leave us then; to leave your country too? I am no stranger to your reasons, and pity your misfortunes.

Stuke. Your pity has undone you. Could Beverley do this? That letter was a false one; a mean contrivance to rob you of your jewels.—I wrote it not.

Mrs Bev. Impossible! Whence came it then?

Stuke. Wronged as I am, madam, I must speak plainly.

Mrs Bev. Do so, and ease me. Your hints have troubled me. Reports, you say, are stirring—Reports of whom? You wished me not to credit them. What, sir, are these reports?

Stuke. I thought them slander, madam; and cautioned you in friendship, lest, from officious tongues, the tale had reached you with double aggravation.

Mrs Bev. Proceed, sir.

Stuke. It is a debt due to my fame; due to an injured wife too—We are both injured.

Mrs Bev. How injured? And who has injured us?

Stuke. My friend, your husband.

Mrs Bev. You would resent for both, then—But know, sir, my injuries are my own, and do not need a champion.

Stuke. Be not too hasty, madam. I come not in resentment, but for acquittance. You thought me poor; and to the feigned distresses of a friend gave up your jewels.

Mrs Bev. I gave them to a husband.

Stuke. Who gave them to a———

Mrs Bev. What, whom did he give them to?

Stuke. A mistress.

Mrs Bev. No, on my life he did not.

Stuke. Himself confessed it, with curses on her avarice.

Mrs Bev. I will not believe it—He has no mistress; or if he has, why is it told to me?

Stuke. To guard you against insults. He told me, that, to move you to compliance, he forged that letter, pretending I was ruined, ruined by him too. The fraud succeeded: and what a trusting wife bestowed in pity, was lavished on a wanton!

Mrs Bev. Then I am lost indeed! and my afflictions are too powerful for me. His follies I have borne without upbraiding, and saw the approach of poverty without a tear.——My affections, my strong affections, supported me through every trial.

Stuke. Be patient, madam.

Mrs Bev. Patient! the barbarous, ungrateful man! And does he think, that the tenderness of my heart is his best security for wounding it? But he shall find, that injuries such as these, can arm my weakness for vengeance and redress.

Stuke. Ha! then I may succeed. [*Aside.*] Redress is in your power.

Mrs Bev. What redress?

Stuke. Forgive me, madam, if, in my zeal to serve you, I hazard your displeasure. Think of your wretched state. Already want surrounds you. Is it in patience to bear that? To see your helpless little one robbed of his birth-right? A sister, too, with unavailing tears, lamenting her lost fortune? No comfort left you, but ineffectual pity from the few, outweighed by insults from the many?

Mrs Bev. Am I so lost a creature?——Well, sir, my redress?

Stuke. To be resolved is to secure it. The marriage vow, once violated, is, in the sight of Heaven, dissolved.—Start not, but hear me. 'Tis now the summer of your youth; time has not cropt the roses from your cheek, though sorrow long has washed them. Then use your beauty wisely, and, freed by injuries, fly from the cruelest of men for shelter with the kindest!

Mrs Bev. And who is he?

Stuke. A friend to the unfortunate; a bold one too, who, while the storm is bursting on your brow, and lightning flashing from your eyes, dares tell you, that he loves you.

Mrs Bev. Would that these eyes had Heaven's own lightning, that, with a look, thus I might blast thee! Am I then fallen so low? Has poverty so humbled me, that I should listen to a hellish offer, and sell my soul for bread? Oh, villain, villain!——But now I know thee, and thank thee for the knowledge.

Stuke. If you are wise, you shall have cause to thank me.

Mrs Bev. An injured husband, too, shall thank thee.

Stuke. Yet know, proud woman, I have a heart as stubborn as your own: as haughty and imperious; and as it loves, so can it hate.

Mrs Bev. Mean, despicable villain! I scorn thee and thy threats. Was it for this, that Beverley was false? that his too credulous wife should, in despair and vengeance, give up her honour to a wretch? But he shall know it, and vengeance shall be his.

Stuke. Why, send him for defiance then. Tell him I love his wife; but that a worthless husband forbids our union. I will make a widow of you, and court you honourably.

Mrs Bev. Oh, coward, coward! thy soul will shrink at him. Yet, in the thought of what may happen, I feel a woman's fears. Keep thy own secret, and begone. Who's there?

Enter LUCY.

Your absence, sir, would please me.

Stuke. I will not offend you, madam.

[*Exit* STUKELY *with* LUCY.

Mrs Bev. Why opens not the earth to swallow such a monster? Be conscience, then, his punisher, till Heaven, in mercy, gives him penitence, or dooms him in his justice.

Re-enter LUCY.

Come to my chamber, Lucy: I have a tale to tell thee, shall make thee weep for thy poor mistress.

Yet heaven the guiltless sufferer regards;
And whom it most afflicts it most rewards.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—BEVERLEY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY, CHARLOTTE, *and* LEWSON.

Char. The smooth-tongued hypocrite!

Lew. But we have found him, and will requite him——Be cheerful, madam; [*To Mrs* BEV.] and for the insults of this ruffian you shall have ample retribution.

Mrs Bev. But not by violence—Remember, you have sworn it; I had been silent else.

Lew. You need not doubt me; I shall be cool as patience.

Mrs Bev. See him to-morrow then.

Lew. And why not now? By Heaven, the veriest worm that crawls is made of braver spirit than this Stukely——Yet, for my promise, I will deal gently with him—I mean to watch his looks—From those, and from his answers to my charge, much may be learnt. Next I will to Bates, and sift him to the bottom; if I fail there, the gang is numerous, and for a bribe will each betray the other——Good night; I will lose no time. [*Exit.*

Mrs Bev. These boisterous spirits, how they wound me! But reasoning is in vain. Come, Charlotte, we will to our usual watch. The night grows late.

Char. I am fearful of events; yet pleased—To-morrow may relieve us. [*Going.*

Enter JARVIS.

How now, good Jarvis?

Jar. I have heard ill news, madam.

Mrs Bev. What news? Speak quickly.

Jar. Men are not what they seem. I fear me Mr Stukely is dishonest.

Char. We know it, Jarvis. But what's your news?

Jar. That there's an action against my master, at his friend's suit.

Mrs Bev. Oh, villain, villain! 'twas this he threatened, then! Run to that den of robbers, Wilson's—Your master may be there. Entreat him home, good Jarvis. Say I have business with him—But tell him not of Stukely—It may provoke him to revenge——Haste, haste, good Jarvis. [*Exit* JAR.

Char. This minister of hell! Oh, I could tear him piece-meal!——

Mrs Bev. I am sick of such a world——Yet Heaven is just; and, in its own good time, will hurl destruction on such monsters. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* BATES *meeting.*

Bates. Where have you been?

Stuke. Fooling my time away; playing my tricks, like a tame monkey, to entertain a woman—No matter where——I have been vexed and disappointed. Tell me of Beverley; how bore he his last shock?

Bates. Like one (so Dawson says) whose senses had been numb'd with misery. When all was lost, he fixed his eyes upon the ground, and stood some time, with folded arms, stupid and motionless; then snatching his sword, that hung against the wainscot, he sat him down, and, with a look of fixed attention, drew figures on the floor. At last, he started up, looked wild, and trembled; and, like a woman seized with her sex's fits, laughed out aloud, while the tears trickled down his face—so left the room.

Stuke. Why, this was madness.

Bates. The madness of despair.

Stuke. We must confine him then. A prison would do well. [*A knocking at the door.*] Hark! that knocking may be his. Go that way down, [*Exit* BATES.]—Who's there?

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. An enemy—an open and avowed one.

Stuke. Why am I thus broke in upon? This house is mine, sir; and should protect me from insult and ill-manners.

Lew. Guilt has no place of sanctuary; wherever found, it is virtue's lawful game. The fox's hold and tyger's den are no security against the hunter.

Stuke. Your business, sir?

Lew. To tell you, that I know you——Why this confusion? That look of guilt and terror? Is Beverley awake; or has his wife told tales? The man, that dares like you, should have a soul to justify his deeds, and courage to confront accusers: not, with a coward's fear, to shrink beneath reproof.

Stuke. Who waits there?

[*Aloud, and in confusion.*

Lew. By Heaven, he dies that interrupts us. [*Shutting the door.*] You should have weighed your strength, sir; and then, instead of climbing to high fortune, the world had marked you for what you are, a little paltry villain.

Stuke. You think I fear you.

Lew. I know you fear me. This is to prove it. [*Pulls him by the sleeve.*] You wanted privacy—A lady's presence took up your attention—Now we are alone, sir. Why, what a wretch! [*Flings him from him.*] The vilest insect in creation will turn, when trampled on; yet has this thing undone a man—by cunning and mean arts undone him. But we have found you, sir; traced you through all your labyrinths. If you would save yourself, fall to confession: no mercy will be shewn else.

Stuke. First prove me what you think me—till then, your threatenings are in vain——And for this insult, vengeance may yet be mine.

Lew. Infamous coward! why, take it now then—[*Draws, and* STUKELY *retires.*] Alas, I pity thee!——Yet that a wretch like this should overcome a Beverley! It fills me with astonishment!——A wretch, so mean of soul, that even desperation cannot animate him to look upon an enemy. You should not have thus soared, sir, unless, like others of your black profession, you had a sword to keep the fools in awe, your villainy had ruined.

Stuke. Villainy! It were best to curb this licence of your tongue; for know, sir, while there are laws, this outrage on my reputation will not be borne with.

Lew. Laws! Dar'st thou seek shelter from the laws, those laws which thou and thy infernal crew live in the constant violation of? Talk'st thou of reputation too, when, under friendship's sacred name, thou hast betrayed, robbed, and destroyed?

Stuke. Ay, rail at gaming; it is a rich topic, and affords noble declamation——Go, preach against it in the city: you will find a congregation in every tavern. If they should laugh at you, fly to my lord, and sermonize it there: he will thank you, and reform.

Lew. And will example sanctify a vice? No, wretch; the custom of my lord, or of the cit, that apes him, cannot excuse a breach of law, or make the gamester's calling reputable.

Stuke. Rail on, I say——But is this zeal for beggared Beverley? Is it for him, that I am treated thus? No; he and his wife might both have groaned in prison, had but the sister's fortune escaped the wreck, to have rewarded the disinterested love of honest Mr Lewson.

Lew. How I detest thee for the thought! But thou art lost to every human feeling. Yet let me tell thee, and may it wring thy heart, that though my friend is ruined by thy snares, thou hast, unknowingly, been kind to me.

Stuke. Have I? It was, indeed, unknowingly.

Lew. Thou hast assisted me in love; given me the merit, that I wanted; since, but for thee, my Charlotte had not known it was her dear self I sighed for, and not her fortune.

Stuke. Thank me, and take her then.

Lew. And, as a brother to poor Beverley, I will pursue the robber, that has stripped him; and snatch him from his gripe.

Stuke. Then know, imprudent man, he is within my gripe; and should my friendship for him be slandered once again, the hand, that has supplied him, shall fall and crush him.

Lew. Why, now there is a spirit in thee! This is indeed to be a villain! But I shall reach thee yet—Fly where thou wilt, my vengeance shall pursue thee—And Beverley shall yet be saved; be saved from thee, thou monster! nor owe his rescue to his wife's dishonour. [*Exit.*

Stuke. [*Pausing.*] Then ruin has enclosed me. Curse on my coward heart! I would be bravely villainous; but it is my nature to shrink at danger, and he has found me. Yet fear brings caution, and that security——More mischief must be done to hide the past——Look to yourself, officious Lewson—there may be danger stirring——How now, Bates?

Enter BATES.

Bates. What is the matter? It was Lewson, and not Beverley, that left you—I heard him loud—You seem alarmed too.

Stuke. Ay, and with reason——We are discovered.

Bates. I feared as much; and therefore cautioned you. But you were peremptory.

Stuke. Thus fools talk ever; spending their idle breath on what is past, and trembling at the future. We must be active. Beverley, at worst, is but suspicious; but Lewson's genius, and his hate to me, will lay all open. Means must be found to stop him.

Bates. What means?

Stuke. Dispatch him——Nay, start not——Desperate occasions call for desperate deeds——We live but by his death.

Bates. You cannot mean it?

Stuke. I do, by Heaven.

Bates. Good night, then. [*Going.*

Stuke. Stay. I must be heard, then answered. Perhaps the motion was too sudden; and human weakness starts at murder, though strong neces-

sity compels it. I have thought long of this; and my first feelings were like yours; a foolish conscience awed me, which I soon conquered. The man, that would undo me, Nature cries out, undo. Brutes know their foes by instinct; and where superior force is given, they use it for destruction. Shall man do less? Lewson pursues us to our ruin; and shall we, with the means to crush him, fly from our hunter, or turn and tear him? It is folly even to hesitate.

Bates. He has obliged me, and I dare not.

Stuke. Why, live to shame then, to beggary and punishment. You would be privy to the deed, yet want the soul to act it. Nay, more, had my designs been levelled at his fortune, you had stepped in the foremost——And what is life without its comforts? Those you would rob him of, and, by a lingering death, add cruelty to murder. Henceforth, adieu to half-made villains—There is danger in them. What you have got is yours; keep it, and hide with it——I will deal my future bounty to those that merit it.

Bates. What is the reward?

Stuke. Equal division of our gains. I swear it, and will be just.

Bates. Think of the means then.

Stuke. He is gone to Beverley's——Wait for him in the street—It is a dark night, and fit for mischief. A dagger would be useful.

Bates. He sleeps no more.

Stuke. Consider the reward. When the deed is done, I have farther business with you. Send Dawson to me.

Bates. Think it already done—and so, farewell. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Why, farewell Lewson, then; and farewell to my fears. This night secures me. I will wait the event within. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to the Street. Stage darkened.*

Enter BEVERLEY.

Bev. How like an out-cast do I wander? Loaded with every curse, that drives the soul to desperation—The midnight robber, as he walks his rounds, sees, by the glimmering lamp, my frantic looks, and dreads to meet me. Whither am I going? My home lies there; all that is dear on earth it holds too; yet are the gates of death more welcome to me—I will enter it no more—Who passes there? It is Lewson—He meets me in a gloomy hour; and memory tells me he has been meddling with my fame.

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Beverley! Well met. I have been busy in your affairs.

Bev. So I have heard, sir; and now must thank you as I ought.

Lew. To-morrow I may deserve your thanks. Late as it is, I go to Bates. Discoveries are making that an arch-villain trembles at.

Bev. Discoveries are made, sir, that you shall tremble at. Where is this boasted spirit, this high demeanour, that was to call me to account? You say I have wronged my sister——Now say as much. But first be ready for defence, as I am for resentment. [*Draws.*

Lew. What mean you? I understand you not.

Bev. The coward's stale acquittance! who, when he spreads foul calumny abroad, and dreads just vengeance on him, cries out, 'What mean you? I understand you not.'

Lew. Coward and calumny! Whence are those words? But I forgive, and pity you.

Bev. Your pity had been kinder to my fame. But you have traduced it; told a vile story to the public ear, that I have wronged my sister.

Lew. 'Tis false. Shew me the man, that dares accuse me.

Bev. I thought you brave, and of a soul superior to low malice; but I have found you, and will have vengeance. This is no place for argument.

Lew. Nor shall it be for violence. Imprudent man! who, in revenge for fancied injuries, would pierce the heart that loves him. But honest friendship acts from itself, unmoved by slander or ingratitude. The life you thirst for, shall be employed to serve you.

Bev. 'Tis thus you would compound then——First, do a wrong beyond forgiveness, and, to redress it, load me with kindnesses unsolicited.——I'll not receive it. Your zeal is troublesome.

Lew. No matter. It shall be useful.

Bev. It will not be accepted.

Lew. It must. You know me not.

Bev. Yes, for the slanderer of my fame; who, under shew of friendship, arraigns me of injustice; buzzing in every ear foul breach of trust, and family dishonour.

Lew. Have I done this? Who told you so?

Bev. The world—'Tis talked of every where. It pleased you to add threats too. You were to call me to account—Why, do it now, then: I shall be proud of such an arbiter.

Lew. Put up your sword, and know me better. I never injured you. The base suggestion comes from Stukely: I see him and his aims.

Bev. What aims? I'll not conceal it; 'twas Stukely that accused you.

Lew. To rid him of an enemy—Perhaps of two—He fears discovery, and frames a tale of falsehood, to ground revenge and murder on.

Bev. I must have proof of this.

Lew. Wait till to-morrow, then.

Bev. I will.

Lew. Good-night——I go to serve you—Forget what is past, as I do; and cheer your family with smiles. To-morrow may confirm them, and make all happy. [*Exit.*

Bev. [*Pausing.*] How vile, and how absurd is man! His boasted honour is but another name for pride, which easier bears the consciousness of guilt, than the world's just reproofs. But 'tis the fashion of the times; and in defence of falsehood and false honour men die martyrs. I knew not that my nature was so bad.

[*Stands musing.*

Enter BATES *and* JARVIS.

Jar. This way the noise was; and yonder's my poor master.

Bates. I heard him at high words with Lewson. The cause I know not.

Jar. I heard him too. Misfortunes vex him.

Bates. Go to him, and lead him home. But he comes this way——I will not be seen by him. [*Exit.*

Bev. [*Starting.*] What fellow's that! [*Seeing* JARVIS.] Art thou a murderer, friend? Come, lead the way; I have a hand as mischievous as thine; a heart as desperate too—Jarvis!—To bed, old man; the cold will chill thee.

Jar. Why are you wandering at this late hour? Your sword drawn too? For Heaven's sake, sheath it, sir—The sight distracts me.

Bev. Whose voice was that? [*Wildly.*]

Jar. 'Twas mine, sir. Let me intreat you to give the sword to me.

Bev. Ay, take it—quickly take it—Perhaps I am not so cursed, but Heaven may have sent thee at this moment to snatch me from perdition.

Jar. Then I am blessed.

Bev. Continue so, and leave me: my sorrows are contagious. No one is blessed that is near me.

Jar. I came to seek you, sir.

Bev. And now thou hast found me, leave me. My thoughts are wild, and will not be disturbed.

Jar. Such thoughts are best disturbed.

Bev. I tell thee that they will not. Who sent thee hither?

Jar. My weeping mistress.

Bev. Am I so meek a husband, then, that a commanding wife prescribes my hours, and sends to chide me for my absence!——Tell her I'll not return.

Jar. Those words would kill her.

Bev. Kill her! Would they not be kind, then? But she shall live to curse me—I have deserved it of her. Does she not hate me, Jarvis?

Jar. Alas, sir, forget your griefs, and let me lead you to her! The streets are dangerous.

Bev. Be wise, and leave me then. The night's black horrors are suited to my thoughts——These stones shall be my resting place. [*Lies down.*] Here shall my soul brood o'er its miseries, till, with the fiends of hell, and guilty of the earth, I start and tremble at the morning's light.

Jar. For pity's sake, sir—Upon my knees, I beg you to quit this place, and these sad thoughts. Let patience, not despair, possess you—Rise, I beseech you———There is not a moment of your absence, that my poor mistress does not groan for.

Bev. Have I undone her, and is she still so kind? [*Starting up.*] It is too much—My brain cannot hold it—Oh, Jarvis, how desperate is that wretch's state, which only death or madness can relieve!

Jar. Appease his mind, good Heaven, and give him resignation! Alas, sir, could beings in the other world perceive the events of this, how would your parents' blessed spirits grieve for you even in heaven! Let me conjure you, by their honoured memories; by the sweet innocence of your yet helpless child, and by the ceaseless sorrows of my poor mistress, to rouse your manhood, and struggle with these griefs.

Bev. Thou virtuous, good old man! thy tears and thy entreaties have reached my heart, through all its miseries.

Jar. Be but resigned, sir, and happiness may yet be yours.

Bev. Prithee be honest, and do not flatter misery.

Jar. I do not, sir. Hark! I hear voices—Come this way; we may reach home unnoticed.

Bev. Well, lead me then.—Unnoticed, didst thou say? Alas, I dread no looks but of those wretches I have made at home! O, had I listened to thy honest warnings, no earthly blessing had been wanting to me! I was so happy, that even a wish for more than I possessed, was arrogant presumption. But I have warred against the power that blessed me; and now am forced to the hell I merit. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* DAWSON.

Stuke. Come hither, Dawson. My limbs are on the rack, and my soul shivers in me, till this night's business be complete. Tell me thy thoughts; is Bates determined, or does he waver?

Daw. At first he seemed irresolute; wished the employment had been mine: and muttered curses on his coward hand, that trembled at the deed.

Stuke. And did he leave you so?

Daw. No; we walked together, and, sheltered by the darkness, saw Beverley and Lewson in warm debate. But soon they cooled, and then I left them to hasten hither; but not till it was resolved Lewson should die.

Stuke. Thy words have given me life. That quarrel, too, was fortunate; for, if my hopes deceive me not, it promises a grave to Beverley.

Daw. You misconceive me. Lewson and he were friends.

Stuke. But my prolific brain shall make them enemies. If Lewson falls, he falls by Beverley. An upright jury shall decree it. Ask me no questions; but do as I direct. This writ, [*Takes out a pocket-book.*] for some days past, I have treasured here till a convenient time called for its use. That time is come. Take it, and give it to an officer. It must be served this instant.

[*Gives a paper.*

Daw. On Beverley!

Stuke. Look at it. It is for the sums that I have lent him.

Daw. Must he to prison, then?

Stuke. I asked obedience, not replies. This

night a jail must be his lodgings. It is probable he is not gone home yet. Wait at his door, and see it executed.

Daw. Upon a beggar?——He has no means of payment.

Stuke. Dull and insensible!—If Lewson dies, who was it killed him?——Why, he that was seen quarrelling with him! and I, that knew of Beverley's intents, arrested him in friendship—A little late, perhaps; but 'twas a virtuous act, and men will thank me for it. Now, sir, you understand me?

Daw. Most perfectly; and will about it.

Stuke. Haste, then; and when it is done, come back and tell me.

Daw. Till then, farewell. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Now, tell thy tale, fond wife! And, Lewson, if again thou canst insult me, I will kneel, and own thee for my master.

Not avarice now, but vengeance fires my breast,
And one short hour must make me cursed or blessed. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

Enter STUKELEY, BATES, *and* DAWSON.

Bates. Poor Lewson!—But I told you enough last night. The thought of him is horrible to me.

Stuke. In the street, did you say? And no one near him?

Bates. By his own door; he was leading me to his house. I pretended business with him, and stabbed him to the heart, while he was reaching at the bell.

Stuke. And did he fall so suddenly?

Bates. The repetition pleases you, I see. I told you he fell without a groan.

Stuke. What heard you of him this morning?

Bates. That the watch found him in their rounds, and alarmed the servants. I mingled with the crowd just now, and saw him dead in his own house——The sight terrified me.

Stuke. Away with terrors, till his ghost rise and accuse us. We have no living enemy to fear, unless it is Beverley; and him we have lodged safe in prison.

Bates. Must he be murdered too?

Stuke. No; I have a scheme to make the law his murderer. At what hour did Lewson fall?

Bates. The clock struck twelve as I turned to leave him. 'Twas a melancholy bell, I thought, tolling for his death.

Stuke. The time was lucky for us——Beverley was arrested at one, you say? [*To* DAWSON.

Daw. Exactly.

Stuke. Good. We'll talk of this presently. The women were with him, I think?

Daw. And old Jarvis. I would have told you of them last night, but your thoughts were too busy.—It is well you have a heart of stone; the tale would melt it else.

Stuke. Out with it, then.

Daw. I traced him to his lodgings; and, pretending pity for his misfortunes, kept the door open, while the officers seized him. 'Twas a damned deed—but no matter——I followed my instructions.

Stuke. And what said he?

Daw. He upbraided me with treachery, called you a villain, acknowledged the sums you had lent him, and submitted to his fortune.

Stuke. And the women——

Daw. For a few minutes astonishment kept them silent. They looked wildly at one another, while the tears streamed down their cheeks. But rage and fury soon gave them words; and then, in the very bitterness of despair, they cursed me, and the monster that had employed me.

Stuke. And you bore it with philosophy?

Daw. 'Till the scene changed, and then I melted. I ordered the officers to take away their prisoner. The women shrieked, and would have followed him: but we forbade them. It was then they fell upon their knees, the wife fainted, the sister raving, and both, with all the eloquence of misery, endeavouring to soften us. I never felt compassion till that moment; and, had the officers been moved like me, we had left the business undone, and fled with curses on ourselves. But their hearts were steeled by custom. The tears of beauty, and the pangs of affection, were beneath their pity. They tore him from their arms, and lodged him in prison, with only Jarvis to comfort him.

Stuke. There let him lie, till we have farther business with him. And for you, sir, let me hear no more of your compassion——A fellow, nursed in villany, and employed from childhood in the business of hell, should have no dealings with compassion.

Daw. Say you so, sir?—You should have named the devil that tempted me——

Stuke. It is false; I found you a villain, and therefore employed you:—But no more of this; we have embarked too far in mischief to recede. Lewson is dead, and we are all principals in his murder. Think of that.—There is time enough for pity, when ourselves are out of danger. Beverley still lives, though in a jail. His ruin will sit heavy on him; and discoveries may be made to undo us all. Something must be done, and speedily. You saw him quarrelling with Lewson in the street last night? [*To* BATES.

Bates. I did; his steward, Jarvis, saw him too

Stuke. And shall attest it. Here is matter to

work upon. An unwilling evidence carries weight with him. Something of my design I have hinted to you before. Beverley must be the author of this murder; and we the parties to convict him.—But how to proceed will require time and thought. Come along with me; the room within is fitted for privacy.—But no compassion, sir [*To* DAWSON.]—We want leisure for it.——This way. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* BEVERLEY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. No news of Lewson yet?

Char. None. He went out early, and knows not what has happened.

Mrs Bev. The clock strikes eight——I will wait no longer.

Char. Stay but till Jarvis comes. He has sent twice to stop us till we see him.

Mrs Bev. I have no life in this separation—Oh what a night was last night! I would not pass another such to purchase worlds by it—My poor Beverley too! What must he have felt?—The very thought distracts me—To have him torn at midnight from me! A loathsome prison his habitation! A cold damp room his lodging! The bleak winds, perhaps, blowing upon his pillow! No fond wife to lull him to his rest! and no reflections but to wound and tear him! 'Tis too horrible—I wanted love for him, or they had not forced him from me.——They should have parted soul and body first—I was too tame.

Char. You must not talk so.——All that we could we did; and Jarvis did the rest—The faithful creature will give him comfort. Why does he delay coming?

Mrs Bev. And there is another fear. His poor master may be claiming the last kind office from him—His heart, perhaps, is breaking.

Char. See, where he comes—His looks are cheerful too.

Enter JARVIS.

Mrs Bev. Are tears then cheerful? Alas, he weeps! Speak to him, Charlotte——I have no tongue to ask him questions.

Char. How does your master, Jarvis?

Jar. I am old and foolish, madam; and tears will come before my words.—But do not you weep [*To Mrs* BEV.]; I have a tale of joy for you.

Mrs Bev. What tale?—Say but he is well, and I have joy enough.

Jar. His mind, too, shall be well—all shall be well—I have news for him, that will make his poor heart bound again.——Fie upon old age—How childish it makes me! I have a tale of joy for you, and my tears drown it.

Char. Shed them in showers, then, and make haste to tell it.

Mrs Bev. What is it, Jarvis?

Jar. Yet why should I rejoice, when a good man dies? Your uncle, madam, died yesterday.

Mrs Bev. My uncle!——Oh, Heavens!

Char. How heard you of his death?

Jar. His steward came express, madam—I met him in the street, enquiring for your lodgings.—I should not rejoice, perhaps; but he was old, and my poor master a prisoner. Now he shall live again. Oh, it is a brave fortune!—and it was death to me to see him a prisoner.

Char. Where left you the steward?

Jar. I would not bring him hither, to be a witness of your distresses; and besides, I wanted, once before I die, to be the messenger of joy to you. My good master will be a man again!

Mrs Bev. Haste, haste then; and let us fly to him! we are delaying our own happiness.

Jar. I had forgot a coach, madam, and Lucy has ordered one.

Mrs Bev. Where was the need of that? The news has given me wings.

Char. I have no joy till my poor brother share it with me. How did he pass the night, Jarvis?

Jar. Why now, madam, I can tell you. Like a man dreaming of death and horrors. When they led him to his cell—for it was a poor apartment for my master—he flung himself upon a wretched bed, and lay speechless till day-break. A sigh, now and then, and a few tears, that followed these sighs, were all that told me he was alive. I spoke to him, but he would not hear me; and when I persisted, he raised his hand at me, and knit his brow so—I thought he would have struck me.

Mrs Bev. Oh, miserable! but what said he, Jarvis? Or was he silent all night?

Jar. At day-break he started from the bed, and, looking wildly at me, asked who I was. I told him, and bid him be of comfort.—Begone, old wretch, says he—I have sworn never to know comfort.——My wife! my child! my sister! I have undone them all, and will know no comfort. Then, falling upon his knees, he imprecated curses upon himself!

Mrs Bev. This is too horrible! But you did not leave him so?

Char. No, I am sure he did not.

Jar. I had not the heart, madam. By degrees I brought him to himself. A shower of tears came to his relief; and he called me his kindest friend, and begged forgiveness of me like a child. My heart throbbed so, I could not speak to him. He turned from me for a minute or two, and suppressing a few bitter sighs, enquired after his wretched family.—Wretched was his word, madam—Asked how you bore the misery of last night—If you had the goodness to see him in prison: and then begged me to hasten to you. I told him he must be more himself first.—He promised me he would; and, bating a few sudden intervals, he became composed and easy—And then I left him; but not without an attendant—a servant in the prison, whom I hired to wait upon him.—It is an hour since we parted.——I was prevented, in my haste, to be the messenger of joy to you.

Mrs Bev. What a tale is this? But we have staid too long—a coach is needless.

Char. Hark! I hear one at the door.

Jar. And Lucy comes to tell us——we will away this moment.

Mrs Bev. To comfort him, or die with him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY, BATES, *and* DAWSON.

Stuke. Here's presumptive evidence at least—or, if we want more, why we must swear more. But all unwillingly—we gain credit by reluctance. I have told you how to proceed. Beverley must die—we hunt him in view now, and must not slacken in the chace. 'Tis either death for him, or shame and punishment for us. Think of that, and remember your instructions—you, Bates, must to the prison immediately. I would be there but a few minutes before you; and you, Dawson, must follow in a few minutes after. So here we divide—but answer me; are you resolved upon this business like men?

Bates. Like villains, rather—but you may depend upon us.

Stuke. Like what we are, then—you make no answer, Dawson—compassion, I suppose, has seized you.

Daw. No; I have disclaimed it—my answer is Bates's—you may depend upon me.

Stuke. Consider the reward! Riches and security! I have sworn to divide with you to the last shilling—so here we separate, till we meet in prison—remember your instructions, and be men. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to a prison.* BEVERLEY *is discovered sitting. After a short pause, he starts up, and comes forward.*

Bev. Why, there's an end, then; I have judged deliberately, and the result is death. How the self-murderer's account may stand, I know not. But this I know—the load of hateful life oppresses me too much—the horrors of my soul are more than I can bear—[*Offers to kneel.*] Father of mercy! I cannot pray—Despair has laid his iron hand upon me, and sealed me for perdition—conscience! conscience! thy clamours are too loud—here's that shall silence thee. [*Takes a phial out of his pocket, and looks at it.*] Thou art most friendly to the miserable. Come, then, thou cordial for sick minds—come to my heart. [*Drinks.*] Oh, that the grave would bury memory as well as body! For, if the soul sees and feels the sufferings of those dear ones it leaves behind, the Everlasting has no vengeance to torment it deeper—I will think no more of it—reflection comes too late—once there was a time for it—but now 'tis past. Who's there?

Enter JARVIS.

Jar. One, that hoped to see you with better looks—why do you turn so from me? I have brought comfort with me. And see, who comes to give it welcome!

Bev. My wife and sister! Why, 'tis but one pang more, then, and farewell world. [*Aside.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. Where is he? [*Runs and embraces him.*] Oh, I have him! I have him! And now they shall never part us more—I have news, love, to make you happy for ever—but do not look coldly on me!

Char. How is it, brother?

Mrs Bev. Alas! he hears us not—speak to me, love. I have no heart to see you thus.

Bev. Nor I to bear the sense of so much shame—this is a sad place!

Mrs Bev. We came to take you from it. To tell you the world goes well again. That Providence has seen our sorrows, and sent the means to help them—your uncle died yesterday.

Bev. My uncle! No, do not say so! Oh, I am sick at heart!

Mrs Bev. Indeed! I meant to bring you comfort.

Bev. Tell me he lives then—if you would bring me comfort, tell me he lives.

Mrs Bev. And if I did—I have no power to raise the dead—he died yesterday.

Bev. And I am heir to him?

Jar. To his whole estate, sir—but bear it patiently—pray bear it patiently.

Bev. Well, well—[*Pausing.*] Why, fame says I am rich, then?

Mrs Bev. And truly so—why do you look so wildly?

Bev. Do I? The news was unexpected. But has he left me all?

Jar. All, all, sir—he could not leave it from you.

Bev. I am sorry for it.

Char. Sorry! Why sorry?

Bev. Your uncle's dead, Charlotte.

Char. Peace be with his soul then—is it so terrible, that an old man should die?

Bev. He should have been immortal.

Mrs Bev. Heaven knows I wished not for his death. 'Twas the will of Providence, that he should die—why are you disturbed so?

Bev. Has death no terrors in it?

Mrs Bev. Not an old man's death. Yet if it troubles you, I wish him living.

Bev. And I, with all my heart.

Char. Why, what's the matter!

Bev. Nothing—how heard you of his death?

Mrs Bev. His steward came express. Would I had never known it!

Bev. Or had heard it one day sooner—for I have a tale to tell, shall turn you into stone; or, if the power of speech remain, you shall kneel down and curse me.

Mrs Bev. Alas! what tale is this? And why are we to curse you—I will bless you for ever.

Bev. No; I have deserved no blessings. The

world holds not such another wretch. All this large fortune, this second bounty of Heaven, that might have healed our sorrows, and satisfied our utmost hopes, in a cursed hour I sold last night.

Char. Sold! How sold ?

Mrs Bev. Impossible!—It cannot be!

Bev. That devil Stukely, with all hell to aid him, tempted me to the deed. To pay false debts of honour, and to redeem past errors, I sold the reversion——Sold it for a scanty sum, and lost it among villains.

Char. Why, farewell all then.

Bev. Liberty and life—Come, kneel and curse me!

Mrs Bev. Then hear me, Heaven! [*Kneels.*] Look down with mercy on his sorrows! Give softness to his looks, and quiet to his heart! Take from his memory the sense of what is past, and cure him of despair! On me! on me! if misery must be the lot of either, multiply misfortunes! I will bear them patiently, so he is happy! These hands shall toil for his support! These eyes be lifted up for hourly blessings on him! And every duty of a fond and faithful wife be doubly done to cheer and comfort him!—So hear me! So reward me! [*Rises.*

Bev. I would kneel too, but that offended Heaven would turn my prayers into curses. What have I to ask for! I, who have shook hands with hope? Is it for length of days that I should kneel! No; my time is limited. Or is it for this world's blessings upon you and your's? To pour out my heart in wishes for a ruined wife, a child, and sister? Oh, no! for I have done a deed to make life horrible to you——

Mrs Bev. Why horrible? Is poverty so horrible?—The real wants of life are few. A little industry will supply them all—And cheerfulness will follow—It is the privilege of honest industry, and we will enjoy it fully.

Bev. Never, never—Oh, I have told you but in part. The irrevocable deed is done.

Mrs Bev. What deed!—And why do you look so at me!

Bev. A deed, that dooms my soul to vengeance—That seals your misery here, and mine hereafter.

Mrs Bev. No, no: you have a heart too good for it—Alas! he raves, Charlotte—His looks too terrify me—Speak comfort to him—He can have done no deed of wickedness.

Char. And yet I fear the worst——What is it, brother?

Bev. A deed of horror.

Jar. Ask him no questions, madam—This last misfortune has hurt his brain. A little time will give him patience.

Enter STUKELY.

Bev. Why is this villain here?

Stuke. To give you liberty and safety. There, madam, is his discharge. [*Giving a paper to Mrs* BEVERLEY.] Let him fly this moment. The arrest last night was meant in friendship; but came too late.

Char. What mean you, sir?

Stuke. The arrest was too late, I say; I would have kept his hands from blood, but was too late.

Mrs Bev. His hands from blood!—Whose blood?—Oh, wretch! wretch!

Stuke. From Lewson's blood.

Char. No, villain! Yet what of Lewson? Speak quickly.

Stuke. You are ignorant then! I thought I heard the murderer at confession.

Char. What murderer?—And who is murdered? Not Lewson!—Say he lives, and I'll kneel and worship you.

Stuke. In pity, so I would; but that the tongues of all cry murder. I came in pity, not in malice; to save the brother, not kill the sister. Your Lewson's dead.

Char. O horrible! Why, who has killed him? And yet it cannot be. What crime had he committed that he should die? Villain! he lives! he lives! and shall revenge these pangs!

Mrs Bev. Patience, sweet Charlotte!

Char. O, 'tis too much for patience!

Mrs Bev. He comes in pity, he says! O, execrable villain! The friend is killed, then, and this the murderer?

Bev. Silence, I charge you!——Proceed, sir.

Stuke. No. Justice may stop the tale—and here is an evidence.

Enter BATES.

Bates. The news, I see, has reached you. But take comfort, madam. [*To* CHAR.] There is one without inquiring for you. Go to him, and lose no time.

Char. O misery! misery! [*Exit.*

Mrs Bev. Follow her, Jarvis. If it be true that Lewson's dead, her grief may kill her.

Bates. Jarvis must stay here, madam. I have some questions for him.

Stuke. Rather let him fly. His evidence may crush his master.

Bev. Why, ay; this looks like management.

Bates. He found you quarrelling with Lewson in the streets last night. [*To* BEV.

Mrs Bev. No; I am sure he did not.

Jar. Or if I did—

Mrs Bev. It is false, old man—They had no quarrel; there was no cause for quarrel.

Bev. Let him proceed, I say——Oh! I am sick! sick!———Reach a chair. [*He sits down.*

Mrs Bev. You droop and tremble, love.——Your eyes are fixed too———Yet you are innocent. If Lewson's dead, you killed him not.

Enter DAWSON.

Stuke. Who sent for Dawson?

Bates. 'Twas I—We have a witness too you little think of—Without there!

Stuke. What witness?

Bates. A right one. Look at him.

Enter LEWSON *and* CHARLOTTE.

Stuke. Lewson! O villains! villains!

[*To* BATES *and* DAWSON.

Mrs Bev. Risen from the dead! Why, this is unexpected happiness!

Char. Or is it his ghost? [*To* STUKELY.] That sight would please you, sir.

Jar. What riddle is this?

Bev. Be quick and tell it—My minutes are but few.

Mrs Bev. Alas! why so? You shall live long and happily.

Lew. While shame and punishment shall rack that viper. [*Pointing to* STUKELY.] The tale is short—I was too busy in his secrets, and therefore doomed to die. Bates, to prevent the murder, undertook it—I kept aloof to give it credit.

Char. And give me pangs unutterable.

Lew. I felt them all, and would have told you—But vengeance wanted ripening. The villain's scheme was but half executed. The arrest by Dawson followed the supposed murder——And now, depending on his once wicked associates, he comes to fix the guilt on Beverley.

Mrs Bev. Oh execrable wretch!

Bates. Dawson and I are witnesses of this.

Lew. And of a thousand frauds. His fortune ruined by sharpers and false dice; and Stukely sole contriver and possessor of all.

Daw. Had he but stopped on this side murder, we had been villains still.

Mrs Bev. Thus Heaven turns evil into good; and, by permitting sin, warns men to virtue.

Lew. Yet punishes the instrument. So shall our laws; though not with death. But death were mercy. Shame, beggary, and imprisonment, unpitied misery, the stings of conscience, and the curses of mankind, shall make life hateful to him—till at last his own hand end him—How does my friend? [*To* BEV.

Bev. Why well. Who is he, that asks me?

Mrs Bev. 'Tis Lewson, love—Why do you look so at him?

Bev. They told me he was murdered. [*Wildly.*

Mrs Bev. Ay; but he lives to save us.

Bev. Lend me your hand—The room turns round.

Mrs Bev. O Heaven!

Lew. This villain here disturbs him. Remove him from his sight—And for your lives see that you guard him. [STUKELY *is taken off by* DAWSON *and* BATES.] How is it, sir?

Bev. 'Tis here—and here. [*Pointing to his head and heart.*] And now it tears me!

Mrs Bev. You feel convulsed too—What is it disturbs you?

Lew. This sudden turn of joy, perhaps—He wants rest too—Last night was dreadful to him. His brain is giddy.

Char. Ay, never to be cured—Why, brother!—O! I fear! I fear!

Mrs Bev. Preserve him, Heaven!—My love! my life! look at me!—How his eyes flame!

Bev. A furnace rages in this heart—I have been too hasty.

Mrs Bev. Indeed!—O me! O me!—Help, Jarvis! Fly, fly for help! Your master dies else.—Weep not, but fly! [*Exit* JARVIS.] What is this hasty deed?—Yet do not answer me—My fears have guessed.

Bev. Call back the messenger—'Tis not in medicine's power to help me.

Mrs Bev. Is it then so?

Bev. Down, restless flames!—[*Laying his hand on his heart*] down to your native hell—There you shall rack me—O! for a pause from pain!

Mrs Bev. Help, Charlotte! Support him, sir! [*To* LEWSON.] This is a killing sight!

Bev. That pang was well—It has numbed my senses—Where's my wife?—Can you forgive me, love?

Mrs Bev. Alas! for what!

Bev. [*Starting again.*] And there's another pang—Now all is quiet—Will you forgive me?

Mrs Bev. I will—tell me for what?

Bev. For meanly dying.

Mrs Bev. No——do not say it.

Bev. As truly as my soul must answer it.——Had Jarvis staid this morning, all had been well. But pressed by shame—pent in a prison—tormented with my pangs for you—driven to despair and madness—I took the advantage of his absence, corrupted the poor wretch he left to guard me, and—swallowed poison.

Mrs Bev. O fatal deed!

Char. Dreadful and cruel!

Bev. Ay, most accursed—And now I go to my account. This rest from pain brings death; yet 'tis Heaven's kindness to me. I wished for ease, a moment's ease, that cool repentance and contrition might soften vengeance.—Bend me, and let me kneel. [*They lift him from his chair, and support him on his knees.*] I'll pray for you too. Thou power, that mad'st me, hear me! If for a life of frailty, and this too hasty deed of death, thy justice dooms me, here I acquit the sentence. But if enthroned in mercy where thou sittest, thy pity has beheld me, send me a gleam of hope; that, in these last and bitter moments, my soul may taste of comfort! and for these mourners here, O! let their lives be peaceful, and their deaths happy!——Now raise me.

[*They lift him to the chair.*

Mrs Bev. Restore him, Heaven! Stretch forth thy arm omnipotent, and snatch him from the grave!—O save him! save him!

Bev. Alas! that prayer is fruitless. Already death has seized me—Yet Heaven is gracious—I asked for hope, as the bright presage of forgiveness, and like a light, blazing through darkness, it came and cheered me—It was all I lived for, and now I die.

Mrs Bev. Not yet!—Not yet!—Stay but a little, and I will die too.

Bev. No; live, I charge you. We have a little one. Though I have left him, you will not leave him. To Lewson's kindness I bequeath him. Is not this Charlotte? We have lived in love, though

I have wronged you. Can you forgive me, Charlotte?

Char. Forgive you! O my poor brother!

Bev. Lend me your hand, love——So—raise me——No——it will not be——My life is finished——O! for a few short moments, to tell you how my heart bleeds for you—That even now, thus dying as I am, dubious and fearful of hereafter, my bosom pang is for your miseries—support her, Heaven!—And now I go——O, mercy! mercy! [*Dies.*

Lew. Then all is over——How is it, madam? ——My poor Charlotte too!

Enter JARVIS.

Jar. How does my master, madam? Here is help at hand——Am I too late then?

[*Seeing* BEVERLEY.

Char. Tears! tears! why fall you not——O wretched sister!——Speak to her, Lewson ——Her grief is speechless.

Lew. Remove her from this sight—Go to her, Jarvis—Lead and support her. Sorrow like hers forbids complaint—Words are for lighter griefs—Some ministering angel bring her peace! [JARVIS *and* CHARLOTTE *lead her off.*] And thou, poor, breathless corpse, may thy departed soul have found the rest it prayed for! Save but one error, and this last fatal deed, thy life was lovely. Let frailer minds take warning; and from example learn, that want of prudence is want of virtue.

Follies, if uncontrouled, of every kind,
Grow into passions, and subdue the mind;
With sense and reason hold superior strife,
And conquer honour, nature, fame, and life.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

BY A FRIEND.

ON every gamester of th' Arabian nation,
'Tis said that Mahomet denounc'd damnation:
But, in return for wicked cards and dice,
He gave 'em black-eyed girls in paradise.
Should he thus preach, good countrymen, to you,
His converts would, I fear, be mighty few,
So much your hearts are set on sordid gain,
The brightest eyes around would shine in vain;
Should the most heavenly beauty bid you take her,
You'd rather hold two aces and a maker.
By your example, our poor sex drawn in,
Is guilty of the same unnat'ral sin;
The study now of every girl of parts,
Is how to win your money, not your hearts.
O! in what sweet, what ravishing delights
Our beaux and belles together pass their nights!
By ardent perturbations kept awake,
Each views with longing eyes the other's—stake.
The smiles and graces are from Britain flown,
Our Cupid is an arrant sharper grown,
And Fortune sits on Cytherea's throne.
In all these things, though women may be blam'd,
Sure men, the wiser men, should be asham'd!
And 'tis a horrid scandal, I declare,
That four strange queens should rival all the fair;
Four jilts, with neither beauty, wit, nor parts,
O shame! have got possession of their hearts:
And those bold sluts, for all their queenly pride,
Have play'd loose tricks, or else they're much belied.
Cards were at first for benefits designed,
Sent to amuse, not to enslave the mind.
From good to bad how easy the transition!
For what was pleasure once, is now perdition.
Fair ladies, then, these wicked gamesters shun,
Whoever weds one, is, you see, undone.

BOADICEA.

BY

GLOVER.

PROLOGUE.

BESIDE his native Thames our poet long
Hath hung his silent harp, and hush'd his song.
Kind Commerce whisper'd, see my blissful state,
And to no smiles but mine resign thy fate;
Beneath the pregnant branches rest awhile,
Which by my culture spread this favour'd isle;
On that fair tree the fruits of every coast,
All which the Ganges and the Volga boast,
All which the sun's luxuriant beam supplies,
Or slowly ripens under frozen skies,
In mix'd variety of growth arise.
The copious leaves beneficence diffuse,
Which on affliction drops restoring dews,
And birds of hope among the loaded sprays,
Tune with enchantment their alluring lays,
To cheer dependence and th' inactive raise.
Rest here, she cried, and smiling Time again
May string the lyre, and I approve the strain.
At length his muse from exile he recalls,
Urged by his patrons in Augusta's walls.
Those generous traders, who alike sustain
Their nation's glory on th' obedient main,
And bounteous raise Affliction's drooping train;
They, who benignant to his toils afford
Their sheltering favour, have his muse restored.
They in her future fame will justly share,
But her disgrace herself must singly bear;
Calm hours of learned leisure they have giv'n,
And could no more, for genius is from heav'n.
To open now her long-hid roll she tries,
Where varied forms of pictured passions rise.
Revenge and pride their furies first unfold,
By artless virtue fatally controul'd.
Scenes, wrought with gentler pencil, then succeed,
Where love persuades a faithful wife to bleed;
Where, joined to public cares, domestic woe
Is seen from manly fortitude to flow.
But if her colours mock the candid eye
By spurious tincts, unmixt with nature's dye,
Ye friendly hands, restrain your fruitless aid,
And with just censure let her labours fade.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

DUMNORIX, *chief of the Trinobantians.*
TENANTIUS, EBRANCUS, } *Officers under Dumnorix.*
FLAMINIUS, ENOBARBUS, } *two Captive Romans.*

WOMEN.

BOADICEA, *Queen of the Icenians.*
VENUSIA, *Wife of Dumnorix.*

Roman Ambassador, Icenians, and Trinobantians.

SCENE.—*The British Camp before the Tent of Dumnorix.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter BOADICEA, DUMNORIX, *Icenians, Trinobantians, and Roman Ambassador.*

Rom. Am. SUETONIUS, leader of the Roman arms,
With gentlest greetings to the Icenian queen,
And Dumnorix, the Trinobantian chief,
Sends health, and proffers friendship. Let the wrongs,
The mutual wrongs, sustained by Rome and Britain——

Boad. May stern Andate, war's victorious goddess,
Again resign me to your impious rage,
If e'er I blot my sufferings from remembrance;
If e'er relenting mercy cool my vengeance,
Till I have driven you to your utmost shores,
And cast your legions on the crimsoned beach!
Your costly dwellings shall be sunk in ashes:
Your fields be ravaged; your aspiring bulwarks
O'erturned, and levelled to the meanest shrub;
Your gaping matrons, and your children's blood,
With mingled streams, shall dye the British sword;
Your captive warriors, victims at our altars,
Shall crowd each temple's spacious round with death:
Else may each power, to whom the Druids bend,
Annul my hopes of conquest and revenge!

Dum. [*To the Ambassador.*] You come to offer terms. Stand forth and answer.
Did not Prasutagus, her dying lord,
On your insatiate emperor bestow
Half of his rich possessions, vainly deeming
The rest might pass unpillaged to his children?
What did ye then, ye savage sons of rapine?
You seized the whole inheritance by force;
Laid waste our cities; with the servile scourge
Disgraced a royal matron; you deflowered
Her spotless daughters, stole our noblest youth,
To serve your pride and luxury in Rome;
Our priests you butchered, and our hoary elders;
Profaned our altars, our religious groves,
And the base image of your Cæsar thrust
Among the gods of Britain; and, by Heaven!
Do you repair to these victorious tents
With proffered peace and friendship?

Rom. Am. Yes, to treat,
As faith, benevolence, and justice dictate.

Dum. How shall we treat with those, whose impious hands
Have rent the sacred bands of mutual trust?
How shall we treat with those, whose stony hearts
Compassion cannot melt, nor shame controul,
Nor justice awe, nor piety restrain,
Nor kindness win, nor gratitude can bind?

Rom. Am. Thou art a stranger to our general's virtues,
No pillager, like Catus, but a soldier,
To calm and sober discipline inured;
He would redress, not widen, your complaints.

Dum. Can he restore the violated maid
To her untainted purity and fame?
Can he persuade inexorable death
To yield our slaughtered elders from the grave?
No, nor by soothing tales elude our vengeance.

Rom. Am. Yet hear us calmly, ere from yonder hills
You call the legions of imperial Rome,
And wake her eagles, which would sleep in peace.

Boad. Begone, and bear defiance to your legions.
Tell them, I come; that Boadicea comes,
Fierce with her wrongs, and terrible in vengeance,
To roll her chariot o'er their firmest ranks,
To mix their soaring eagles with the dust,
And spurn their pride beneath her horses' hoofs.

Rom. Am. Then be prepared for war.

Boad. We are prepared.
Come from your hills, ye fugitive remains
Of shattered cohorts, by their fear preserved.
The embattled nations of our peopled isle,
Yet fresh from seventy thousand slaughtered Romans,
Shall add yon refuse to the purpled heap.
And yet amid triumphant desolation,
Though flames each Roman colony devour,
Though each distracted matron view her infant
Grasp with its tender hands the piercing spear;
Though your grey fathers to the falchion's edge
Each feeble head surrender—my revenge
Will pine unsated, and my greatness want
Redress proportioned to a queen's disgrace.

Dum. Go, and report this answer to Suetonius:
Too long have parents' sighs, the cries of orphans,
And tears of widows, signalized your sway,
Since your ambitious Julius first advanced
His murderous standard on our peaceful shores.
At length, unfettered from his parent sloth,
The British genius lifts his ponderous hands,
To hurl, with ruin, his collected wrath,
For all the wrongs a century hath borne,
In one black period, on the Roman race.

Rom. Am. Yet, ere we part, your price of ransom name
For the two captive Romans.

Boad. Not the wealth,
Which loads the palaces of sumptuous Rome,
Shall bribe my fury. Hence, and tell your legions,
The hungry ravens, which inhabit round
The chalky cliffs of Albion, shall assemble
To feast upon the limbs of these, your captains,

Shall riot in the gore of Roman chiefs,
These masters of the world!—Produce the prisoners. [*To an Icenian.*

Enter ENOBARBUS *and* FLAMINIUS *in chains.*

Boad. Stay, if thou wilt, and see our victims fall. [*To the Ambassador.*

Enob. [*To* BOAD.] Dart not on me thy fiery eyes, barbarian!
Vain are thy efforts to dismay a Roman.
Life is become unworthy of my care;
And these vile limbs, by galling chains dishonoured,
I give most freely to the wolves and thee!

Rom. Am. Mistaken queen! the Romans do not want
These instigations, nor thy proud defiance,
To meet your numbers in the vale below.

Enob. [*To the Ambas.*] Then, wherefore dost thou linger here in vain?
Commend us to Suetonius; bid him straight
Arrange his conquering legions in the field,
There teach these rash barbarians to repent
Of their disdain, and wish for peace too late.

Rom. Am. [*To the prisoners.*] Yes, to Suetonius, and the Roman camp,
These heavy commendations will we bear:
That, for two gallant countrymen, our love
And indignation, at their fate, may sharpen
Each weapon's point, and strengthen every nerve,
Till humbled Britain have appeased their shades.
[*Exit.*

Enob. Come, let us know our fate.

Boad. Prepare for death.

Enob. Then cease to loiter, savage.

Dum. [*To* ENOB.] Now, by Heaven,
Wert thou no Roman, I could save and love thee.
That dauntless spirit, in another breast,
And in a blameless cause, were truly noble,
But shews, in thee, the murderer and ruffian.

Enob. Thy hate or favour are alike to me.

Flam. [*To* DUM.] May I demand, illustrious Trinobantian,
Why must we fall, because uncertain war
Hath made us captives?

Dum. If, in open battle,
With generous valour to have faced our arms,
Were all our charge against thee, thou might'st rest,
Secure of life; but leading thee to die
Is execution on a general robber.

Enob. [*To* FLAM.] And dost thou meanly sue to these barbarians?

Flam. [*To* DUM.] Though our rapacious countrymen have drawn
Your just resentment, we are guiltless both.

Boad. [*To* FLAM.] So are ten thousand infants, whom the name,
The single name of Roman shall condemn,
Like thee, to perish by the unsparing sword.

Flam. Yet more than guiltless, we may plead desert
With Boadicea.

Boad. Insolent pretension!
A Roman plead desert with Boadicea!
This shall enlarge the portion of thy sufferings;
For this, not only shall thy blood embrue
Andate's shrine, but torture shall be added,
And fury wanton in thy various pains.

Enob. [*To* BOAD.] Produce thy tortures; them and thee we scorn.

Ten. Fall back with reverence, Trinobantian soldiers!
See who advances from your general's tent.

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Victorious sister, may the unresisting labour
Of fortune weave new honours to adorn thee,
And Dumnorix, thy colleague, and my lord.
But if, amid these warlike consultations,
Ere yet the ordered pomp of battle moves,
A supplicating sound may reach thy ear,
Stoop from thy glory to an act of mercy.
Thy doom pronounced on these unhappy captives——

Boad. Ha!

Ven. Their deservings, and thy daughter's prayer,
Mixed with my own compassion, from the tent
Have called me forth, a suitor to thy pity,
That thou wouldst hear and spare them.

Boad. Spare these captives!

Dum. Why this request, Venusia?

Ven. Give them hearing:
They can unfold a story, which demands
Your whole attention.

Dum. Let us hear. Proceed. [*To* FLAM.

Flam. The Romans' late injustice we abhorred,
Nor joined the band of spoilers. In that season,
We chanced one day to wander through the forest,
Which parts our confines from the Icenian land.
We found a beauteous virgin in our way.

Boad. Wretch, dost thou hope to barter with our sister
For thy base life?

Flam. I fear not death, oh, queen!
But dread dishonour, even among my foes.

Enob. Death is thy terror; reason else would teach thee,
No gratitude with cruelty can dwell.

Flam. Deep in that wood we met the lovely maid,
Chased by a brutal soldier. At our threats
He soon retreated. To our home we led her,
From insult guarded, sent her back with honour:
Nor was she less than Boadicea's daughter.

Ven. Now, dearest sister, whose successful standard
Not valour more than equity upholds;
And thou, my husband, who dost rise in arms,
Oppressive deeds in others to chastise,
From your own guiding justice will you stray,
And blend deservers with the herd of guilt?

Dum. And are you Romans? Yes, we will, Venusia,
Repay their worthy deed. Strike off their fetters.

Boad. What do I hear! A British chief's command!
Who'er unchains a Roman, on mankind

Lets loose oppression, insolence, and rapine,
Sets treason, falsehood, vice, and murder free!
Ven. Yet these preserved thy Emmeline from shame.
Boad. Not less the victim of eternal shame
Was she conducted to their hateful mansion.
To guard her honour, and be less than ruffians,
Had been repugnant to their name and race;
But fear of me compelled them to relieve her.
Then shall two Romans, nursed in fraud and falsehood,
From childhood trained to each flagitious deed,
By coloured pleas to shun the fate they merit,
Here find regard against the thousand mouths
Of Boadicea's sufferings? No, this moment
Shall they expire in torture.
Ven. Yet reflect;
Of all the paths, which lead to human bliss,
The most secure and grateful to our steps
With mercy and humanity is marked.
The sweet-tongued rumour of a gracious deed
Can charm from hostile hands the uplifted blade,
The gall of anger into milk transform,
And dress the power of enmity in smiles.
Boad. Still dost thou dare, Venusia——
Dum. Gently, sister:
And, trust me, these resemble virtuous men.
Boad. Was I not virtuous, whom the Romans lashed?
Were not my violated children virtuous?—
Bear them this instant to the fiercest rack;
And, while their trembling limbs are strained with torture,
While, through the cruel agony of pain,
The bloody drops bedew their shivering cheeks,
Tell them how gentle are the pangs they feel,
To those the soul of Boadicea proved,
When Roman rage her naked limbs exposed,
And marked her flesh with ever-during shame!
Dum. [*To the Britons.*] Withhold your hand.
Boad. What means the Trinobantian?
Dum. To save thy benefactors, and proclaim,
Whate'er by valour we extort from fortune,
We yet deserve by justice.
Boad. To contend
With Boadicea, and protect her foes,
Did she awaken thy ignoble sloth,
Which else, without resentment of thy wrongs,
Had slept obscure at home?
Dum. Forbear; be calm.
Boad. Yes, under bondage thou hadst tamely bowed,
Had not I fired thy slow, inactive soul.
Dum. Not with unbridled passion, I confess,
I wield the sword and mount the warlike car.
With careful eyes I viewed our suffering isle,
And meditated calmly to avenge her.
Unmoved by rage, my soul maintains her purpose
Through one unaltered course; and oft before
As I have guided thy unruly spirit,
Against its wildness will I now protect thee,
And from a base, inhuman action save thee.
Boad. Thy boasted calmness is the child of fear;
Thou tremblest to exasperate the foe.
Well was it, Britons, in our former conquests,
That I presided o'er the scene of slaughter;
Else had those thousands of the Roman youth,
Whose bodies lie extended on our fields,
Stood at this hour a threatening host against you.
Come, then, ye warriors! follow your conductress,
And drag these slaves to death.
Dum. They will not move,
Fixed with amazement at thy matchless frenzy.
Do thou revere these warriors, who with scorn
Observe thy folly.
Ven. Husband, sister, hear!
Oh, if my humbled voice, my prostrate limbs,
If tears and sighs of anguish may atone
For this pernicious discord I have raised——
Boad. [*To* VEN.] Hence with thy despicable sighs and tears! [*To* DUM.
And thou, presumptuous, what invidious power,
Foe to thy safety, animates thy pride
Still to contend with Boadicea's wrath?
Dum. No, by Andate, I contend not with thee.
At this important season, when the soldier
Thirsts for the conflict, it would ill become me
To trifle here in discord with a woman.
Nay, do not swell that haughty breast in vain:
When once the sacred evidence of justice
Illuminates my bosom, on a rock,
Which neither tears can soften, nor the gusts
Of passion move, my resolution stands.
Boad. Now Heaven fulfil my curses on thy head!
May every purpose of thy soul be frustrate,
May infamy and ruin overtake thee,
May base captivity and chains o'erwhelm thee,
May shameful crimson from thy shoulders start,
Like mine, dishonoured with a servile scourge!
With pain all shivering, and thy flesh contracting,
Low may'st thou crouch beneath the expected stroke,
Even from the hands thou sav'st!
Tenan. Alas, great princess!
Divert this wrath against the impending foe,
Whose formidable ranks will soon descend
From yonder hill.
Boad. [*To the Britons.*] Ungrateful and perfidious!
Now would I draw my spirit from your camp,
Leave you with them defenceless and exposed;
Then should your shattered chariots be o'erthrown,
Your javelins broken, and in hasty flight
Far from your trembling hands the buckler cast,
Did not the insatiate thirst, which burns my soul
To empty every vein of Roman blood,
Protect you, traitors, from my indignation.
But, by the ensanguined altars of Andate,
Thou, Dumnorix, be sure, shalt rue this day;
For thou, henceforward, art to me a Roman.
[*Exit.*
Ven. Oh, Dumnorix!
Dum. Let not this frantic woman
Grieve thy mild nature—Romans, cease to fear;
These are my tents: retire in safety thither.
[*Exeunt* FLAM. *and* ENOB

Do thou go forth this instant and command
[*To* TENAN.
Each ardent youth to gird his falchion round him,
His ponderous spear to loosen from the turf,
And brace the target firmly on his arm.
His car let every charioteer prepare,
His warlike seat each combatant assume,
That every banner may in battle wave,
Ere the sun reaches his meridian height.
[*Exit* TENAN.

Ven. My lord and husband!

Dum. Wherefore dost thou hold me,
And in my passage thy endearments plant?
I must prepare this moment to confront
The foul and ghastly face of cruel war:
And, by the gods, I rather court at present
That shape of horror than thy beauteous form.
Then go, thou dear intruder, and remove
Thy softness from me.

Ven. I will stay no longer
Than brave Tenantius hath performed thy orders.
Long have I known thy valour, skilled to throw
The rapid dart, and lift the unconquered shield.
A confidence, like this, hath still diffused
Enough of firmness through my woman's heart,
Ne'er to molest thee with a woman's fears,
This day excepted; now my weakness governs,
And terror, too importunate, will speak.
Hast thou encountered yet such mighty powers
As down that mountain suddenly will rush?
From every part the Romans are assembled,
All versed in arms, and terrible in valour.

Dum. Tell me, thou lovely coward, am not I
As terrible? or falls the Roman sword
On the tough buckler, and the crested helm,
With deadlier weight than mine? Away, and fear not;
Secure and calm, repose thee in thy tent;
Think on thy husband, and believe he conquers:
Amid the rage of battle he will think
On thee; for thee he draws the martial blade,
For thy loved infants gripes the pointed ash.
Go, and expect me to return victorious;
Thy hand shall dress my wounds, and all be well.

Ven. Far better be our fortune, than for thee
To want that office from my faithful hand,
Or me to stain thy triumphs with my tears!

Dum. Fear not. I tell thee, when thou seest my limbs
With dust bespread, my brows with glorious sweat,
And some distinguished wound to grace my breast,
Thou, in the fulness of thy love, shalt view me,
And swear, I seem most comely in thy sight.
Thy virtue, then, shall view me worthier of thee,
Than did thy fondness on our nuptial day.

Ven. It shall be so. All wounded thou shalt find
My heart prepared to stifle its regret,
And smooth my forehead with obedient calmness.
Yet hear me further; something will I offer
More than the weak effects of female dread;
Thou goest to fight in discord with thy colleague:
It is a thought, which multiplies my fears.

Dum. Well urged, thou dearest counsellor, who best
Canst heal this mischief. Let thy meekness try
The soft persuasion of a private conference,
To win from error a bewildered sister,
While none are present to alarm her pride.

Ven. I go, but, trembling, doubt my vain attempt;
Unless, commissioned with thy dear injunctions,
My soul, exerted to perform thy pleasure,
Could give persuasion all my force of duty.
[*Exit.*

Dum. Hark! we are summoned.

Enter TENANTIUS.

Tenan. Every band is formed:
The Romans, too, in close arrangement stand.

Dum. Ye warriors, destined to begin the onset,
My Trinobantians! it is time to seek
The embattled foe. And you, all-judging gods!
Look down benignant on a righteous cause.
Indeed we cannot give you, like the Romans,
A proud and sumptuous offering: we abound not
In marble temples, or in splendid altars:
Yet though we want this vain, luxurious pomp,
Rough though we wander on the mountain's head,
Through the deep vale, and o'er the craggy rock,
We still demand your favour; we can shew
Hands, which for justice draw the avenging steel,
Firm hearts, and manners undebased by fraud.
To you, my dauntless friends, what need of words?
Your cities have been sacked, your children slain,
Your wives dishonoured—Lo! on yonder hills
You see the spoilers; there the ruffians stand.
Your hands are armed; then follow, and revenge.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS *and* ENOBARBUS.

Flam. Ho! Enobarbus, thou may'st now come forward.
What has thy angry soul been brooding o'er?

Enob. Well, thou hast sued, and hast obtained thy suit;
Of these barbarians meanly hast implored
Thy wretched life, and hast it. Must I thank thee
For this uncommon privilege to stand
A tame spectator of the Roman shame,

To see exulting savages o'erturn
Our walls and ramparts, see them with the spoils
Of our waste dwellings, with our captive eagles
And ancient trophies, ravished from our temples,
March in rude triumph o'er the gods of Rome?
Flam. What, thou hadst rather die!
Enob. And thou hadst rather
Live, like a dog, in chains, than die with courage,
Thou most unworthy of the Roman name!
Flam. Did those, who now inhabit Rome, deserve
The name of Romans, did the ancient spirit
Of our forefathers still survive among us,
I should applaud this bold contempt of life.
Our ancestors, who lived while Rome was free,
Might well prefer a noble fate to chains;
They lost a blessing we have never known:
Born and inured to servitude at home,
We only change one master for another,
And Dumnorix is far beyond a Nero.
Enob. Mean'st thou to mock me?
Flam. No, I mean to shew
Thy stern opinions suit not with the times.
Enob. Still by our valour we control the world,
And in that duty will I match the foremost.
If our forefathers' manners be neglected,
Free from that blame, I singly will maintain them.
My sentiments are moulded by my spirit,
Which wants thy pliant qualities to yield
With every gust of fortune, rude or mild,
And crouch beneath example, base or worthy.
Flam. Well, if thou canst not brook a British master—
Enob. No, nor thy wanton folly will I brook,
Which sports alike with slavery or freedom,
Insensible of shame.
Flam. Suppose I free thee.
Enob. Free me!
Flam. This day, if fortune be propitious.
Enob. Ha! do not cheat me with delusive fable,
And trifle with my bonds.
Flam. By all my hopes,
I do not trifle.
Enob. Wilt thou give my bosom
Once more to buckle on the soldier's harness,
And meet in battle our insulting foes?
Shall my keen falchion gore the flying rout,
And raise a bleeding trophy to revenge,
For each indignity, which Rome hath borne?
Hold me no longer in suspense! instruct me,
From whence these hopes proceed!
Flam. Thou know'st I loved
The British princess.
Enob. Hast thou raised my hopes
To freedom, future victory, and honour,
And dost thou talk of love?
Flam. That love shall save us.
Thou saw'st the gentle Emmeline but now
Stole to our tent, and gave the tenderest welcome.
Unchanged I found her, soft and artless still.
The generous maid already hath suggested
The means of flight. The battle once begun,
While every Briton is intent on war,
Herself will guide us to a place of safety.
Enob. Now I commend thee.
Flam. Thou approv'st, then?
Enob. Ay.
Flam. And see, the joyful moment is approaching;
See, where the unnumbered Trinobantians spread
In rude disorder o'er the vale beneath,
Whose broad extent this eminence commands.
Mark their wide-waving multitude, confused
With mingling standards and tumultuous cars:
But, far superior to the rest, behold
The brave and generous Dumnorix, erect
With eager hope, his lofty javelin shakes,
And with unpolished majesty adorns
The front of war.
Enob. I mark the rabble well;
And soon shall view the Romans from their station
Between those woods, which shade the adverse hills,
Sweep with resistless ardour to the vale,
And trample o'er the savages like dust.
[*A march.*
Flam. That smiling vale with pity I contemplate,
And wish more gentle footsteps might be seen
To press its verdure, and that softer notes
Than war's terrific clamours, might be tuned
From those surrounding shades, to join the murmurs
Of that fair channel, whose sonorous bed
Receives the stream, descending from this grove
To form the limpid maze, which shines below.
Enob. I see it glistening in the noon-day sun.
But British gore will change its glassy hue.
Flam. Oh! might we rather on its friendly banks
Erect a grateful monument to Peace!
That she, her sway resuming, might afford me
To clasp the gallant Dumnorix, and style him
My friend, my benefactor, and preserver.
Stand from before this tempest, while it passes.

Enter BOADICEA *and Icenians.*

Boad. Oh! I could drive this javelin through my heart,
To ease its tortures. Disobeyed! Controuled!
Even in my army's sight! Malignant powers,
If such there be, who o'er revenge preside,
Who steel the breast with ever-during hate,
And aid black rancour in its purposed mischief,
Be present now, and guide my indignation!
[*Pauses.*
The Trinobantians are advanced before me.
Let them sustain the onset; let the Romans
On Dumnorix with every cohort press,
Till he entreat for Boadicea's aid.
Then shall my eager eyes enjoy his ruin;
And when the insulting boaster is o'erthrown,
His bands dispersed, or gasping in the dust,
Then will I rush exulting in my car,
Like fierce Andate, on the wearied foe
Lead rout and slaughter, through a tide of gore
Impel my clotted wheels, redeem the day,

And, from the mouth of danger snatching conquest,
Crown my revenge with glory.

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Stand apart,
At my request, Icenians. O, unbend
To BOAD.
That lowering brow, and hear a suppliant sister!
So prone to error is our mortal frame,
Time could not step without a trace of horror,
If wary nature on the human heart,
Amid its wild variety of passions,
Had not impressed a soft and yielding sense,
That, when offences give resentment birth,
The kindly dews of penitence may raise
The seeds of mutual mercy and forgiveness.
Boad. Weak wretch, and yet whose impotence aspires
To mix in warlike councils, and determine
The fate of captives, won in fields of death,
Thou wouldst do better to reserve thy tears;
Thou shalt have cause for penitential torrents.
Ven. They will not wait a second birth of woe.
At thy severity they burst already.
Why turns on me that formidable aspect,
Wont with commanding sternness to behold
Its foes abashed, and victory its vassal?
Yet how much brighter is the wreath of glory,
When interwove with clemency and justice?
Thou goest to battle; there obtain renown;
But learn compassion from my tears, nor think
Benignity enfeebles, or dishonours
The most exalted valour.
Boad. Shall the tears
Of abject importunity detain me,
While Vengeance, striding from his grisly den,
With fell impatience grinds his iron teeth,
And waits my nod to satisfy his hunger?
Hence to the employment of thy feeble distaff!
Ven. Not skilled, like thee, in war's ennobling toils,
Inferior praise, and humbler tasks I court,
And own my safety in thy loftier virtues;
Yet not like thee, with unforgiving wrath,
Could I resign a sister to her grief
At this tremendous hour, so near deciding
The fate of both. One gentle word bestow,
And I will leave thee with obedient haste;
Nay, I will seek the altars, and request,
That in the future triumphs of this day,
Heaven may refuse to Dumnorix a share,
And give thee all.
Boad. Does Dumnorix consent
To sacrifice the Romans?—Art thou mute?
Still does he brave me? But your favoured captives
Shall not escape. They soon shall join the victims,
Which this unconquered javelin shall reserve
To solemnize the fall of Rome's dominion.
Then to my glory Dumnorix shall bend;
In sight of Britain shall his baffled pride
The pomp of public sacrifice behold,
Behold and pine. You take a band of soldiers,
[*To an Icenian.*
Watch well around the Trinobantian tents,
And guard these Romans, as your lives. I tell thee,
[*To* VEN.
Their gore shall yet besmear Andate's altar.
Ven. In silent awe I heard thy first resentment,
Yet hoped, the well-known accents of affection,
In kindness whispered to thy secret ear,
Might to thy breast recall its exiled pity,
That gentle inmate of a woman's heart.
Boad. Durst thou, presumptuous, entertain a thought
To give this bosom, nerved with manly strength,
The weak sensations of a female spirit?
Ven. When I remind thy elevated soul,
That we by mutual interest are but one,
And by the indissoluble ties of birth;
Are those sensations weak which nature prompts?
With justice strengthened, can her powerful voice
Find no persuasion?
Boad. None. Provoke no more
With plaintive murmurs my indignant ear.
Thou, and thy husband, authors of my shame,
Before the assembled chiefs, may rest assured,
No prayers shall soften, no atonement bribe,
And no submission shall appease the wrong.
May desolation trample on my dwelling
A second time, rapacious force, again,
And insult, revel through my inmost chambers,
If I forgive you! Thou hast food for anguish;
Go, and indulge its appetite at leisure.
Ven. Yes, I will hasten to the holy shrine,
There wring my hands, and melt in copious sorrow,
Not for my injured self, but thee, remorseless
To mourn thy faded honours, which, deformed
By harsh injustice to thy blameless friends,
Ne'er will revive in beauty. Not success,
Not trophies rising round thee, not the throng
Of circling captives, and their conquered standards,
Nor glorious dust of victory, can hide
From just reproach thy unrelenting scorn,
While none deplore thee, but the wronged Venusia.
[*Exit.*
Boad. Stern power of war, my patroness and guide,
To thee each Roman captive I devote.
Come then, vindictive goddess, in thy terrors;
O'erwhelm with rage his sacrilegious head,
Who would defraud thy altars! O confound
His ranks, his steeds, his chariots, and thy favour
To me, thy martial votaress, confine,
In sex like thee, and glowing with thy fires!
[*Exeunt all but* ENOB. *and* FLAM.
Enob. Do thou come forward now, and say, what terrors
Has thy dejected soul been brooding o'er?
Yon furious dame, who filled thee so with dread,
Is marching onward. Raise thy head, and look;
See, where e'en now with sullen pride she mounts

Her martial seat; yet wond'rous slow, by Heaven,
Her car descends, nor soon will reach the vale.
Thou look'st desponding. Art thou still dismayed?
Thinkst thou yon dreadful woman will return?
From us she moves, though slowly; then take comfort!

Flam. Far other cares than terror fill my breast.

Enob. What means this languor? Wherefore heaves that sigh?

Flam. O Enobarbus, wilt thou bear my weakness?
I see the moment of deliverance near,
Yet pine in grief.

Enob. Whate'er the folly be,
With which thy bosom teems, the gods confound it!

Flam. To see the dearest object of my soul,
Just see her after such a tedious absence,
Then vanish from her sight perhaps for ever;
When these reflections rise, the sweet exchange
From bonds to freedom, which to her I owe,
Is mixed with bitterness, and joy subsides.

Enob. Why didst thou leave the fair Italian fields,
Thou silken slave of Venus? What could move
Thee to explore these boisterous northern climes,
And change yon radiant sky for Britain's clouds?
What dost thou here, effeminate? By Heaven,
Thou shouldst have loiter'd in Campania's villas,
And in thy garden nursed, with careful hands,
The gaudy-vested progeny of Flora;
Or indolently paced the pebbled shore,
And eyed the beating of the Tuscan wave,
To waste thy irksome leisure. Wilt thou tell me,
What thou dost here in Britain? Dost thou come
To sigh and pine? Could Italy afford
No food for these weak passions? Must thou traverse
Such tracts of land, and visit this cold region,
To love and languish? Answer me, what motive
First brought thee hither? But forbear to urge
it was in quest of honour; for the god
Of war disclaims thee.

Flam. Well, suppose I answer,
That friendship drew me from the golden Tyber,
With thee to combat this inclement sky,
Will it offend thee?

Enob. No, I am thy friend,
And I will make a Roman of thee still;
But let me see no languishing dejection
More on thy brow, nor hear unmanly sighs.
Gods! canst thou dream of love, when yonder see,
The Roman legions, all arrayed for battle,
Are now descending; see their dreaded eagles,
Their dazzling helmets, and their crimson plumes!
A grove of javelins glitters down the steep;
They point their terrors on the astonished foe;
Soon will they charge the Britons in the vale,
And with the auspicious glories of this day,
Enrich the annals of imperial Rome.
O curst captivity! with double weight
I feel thee now! malicious fate! to suffer
A Roman thus to stand confined in bondage,
And see the triumphs, which he cannot share.
By Heaven, Flaminius! I will never bear it.
Where is thy Briton? Will she lead us hence?
Else, by the god of war, unarmed I rush
To join the glorious scene, which opens there.

Flam. I see her coming, and will fly to meet her. [*Exit.*

Enob. Our time is short, remember, do not dally.—
I have a thought, lies ripening in my breast,
And teems with future glory; if the fight
Prove undecisive, and these tents subsist,
Soon will I bid thee, hostile camp, farewell.
Thou saw'st me come in thraldom; I depart
A fugitive: if ever I return,
Thou shalt receive me in another guise;
Then shalt thou feel me, when my shining helm
Shall strike cold terror through thy boldest guards,
And from its lofty crest destruction shake.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS *and* ENOBARBUS.

Flam. OUR lovely guide attends us. Thy impatience
Hath called me loiterer.

Enob. Thou may'st loiter still.
Thou canst not hasten, nor retard our fate,
Which is irrevocably fixed.

Flam. What say'st thou?

Enob. I say, prepare to die. If Boadicea
Return once more, our destiny is fixed.
Whate'er her merciless revenge may purpose,
Elate with conquest, or incensed by loss,
If on the rack to strain our bursting sinews,
If from the bleeding trunks to lop our limbs,
Or with slow fires protract the hours of pain,
We must abide it all. Collect thy spirit,
And, like a Roman, dauntless wait thy doom.

Flam. I hear thee, but thy meaning—

Enob. Hear again:
Before the tent some paces as I stood,
And joyful saw the Trinobantian guard,
Of us neglectful, from this quarter drawn
To view the impending battle; on a sudden,
A curst Icenian cast his jealous eye
Athwart my steps, then called a numerous band,
Who prowl around us, as a destined prey.

Flam. Malicious fortune!

Enob. Now thou seest my meaning.
Flam. Our flight were vain, while these observe us.
Enob. True.
What has thy tame submission now availed,
Thy abject supplication to barbarians?
Hadst thou with courage met thy fate at first,
We had been dead, ere now.
Flam. To view the sun
Through his gay progress from the morn, 'till even,
Possess my friends, my parents, and my love,
Within the circle of my native walls,
Were joys I deemed well worthy of my care;
But since that care is fruitless, I can leave
This light, my friends, my parents, love, and country,
As little daunted at my fate as thou,
Though not so unconcerned.
Enob. Oh, Mars and Vesta!
Is it a vision, which you raise before me,
To charm my eyes? Behold a scene, Flaminius,
To cheer a Roman in the gasp of death!
The Britons are defeated; look, Flaminius,
Back from the vale in wild tumultuous flight
Behold their numbers sweeping toward the hill;
Already some are swarming up its side,
To reach their camp for shelter; pale dismay
With hostile rage pursues their broken rear,
While massacre, unchidden, cloys his famine,
And quaffs the blood of nations. Oh! in vain
Dost thou oppose thy bosom to the tide
Of war, and brandish that recovered standard!
Vain is thy animating voice to those,
Whom fear makes deaf! Oh, Dumnorix! thy toils
Are fruitless; Britain in the scale of fate
Yields to the weight of Rome. Now, life, farewell!
Shine on, bright Phœbus! those who rest behind
To share thy splendours, while I sink in darkness,
Are far beneath my envy. I resign
These eyes with pleasure to eternal shades;
They now have seen enough.
Flam. Whence this despair?
A blind confusion fills the spacious camp.
Already consternation hath dispersed
Our guard. Even Dumnorix retires—He comes;
Avoid him—Trust me, I am well instructed,
And will conduct thee to a safe retreat.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter DUMNORIX, *with a Standard.*

Dum. Thou hard-kept remnant of our shattered fortune,
Stand there before the partial eye of Heaven,
Which has preferred the Romans' splendid altars
To the plain virtue of a British heart.
Presumptuous phrenzy! Why is Heaven reproached?
Oh, Boadicea, thou perfidious mischief!

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Now let my duty o'er my fear prevail,
Fill my whole breast with tenderness, and heal,
With sweetest comfort, thy distress.
Dum. My wife!
Thou most unlike to yon degenerate woman,
Her country's bane!
Ven. I tremble at thy words.
Dum. Be not dismayed; the camp is still our own.
Night is impending, and the Romans halt.
Ven. But what of Boadicea?
Dum. Hear, and mourn.
The Trinobantians scarce had filled the vale,
When, from a narrow pass between the woods,
Forth burst the Romans, wedged in deep array.
I found our struggle vain, and sent for aid
To Boadicea; she, with scorn, replied,
I did not want the assistance of a woman;
Nor left her station, till my broken ranks
Were driven among the Icenians; in a moment
All was confusion, slaughter, and defeat.

Enter BOADICEA.

Dum. Gods! art thou safe?
Ven. Oh! most unhappy sister!
When last we parted, cruel were thy words,
A sure presage of endless grief to me;
Yet my desponding spirit ne'er foreboded,
That thou couldst deviate from a prosperous course,
When every gale conspired to swell thy glory.
Boad. Throw not on me the crime of envious fortune.
Dum. Dost thou blame fortune, traitress?
Boad. Then the blame
Take on thy single head.
Dum. Avoid my sight!
Boad. Thou ledst the van.
Dum. Avaunt!
Boad. Thou fled'st the first;
Now find'st too late the importance of a woman.
Dum. Too true, I find a woman cursed with power
To blast a nation's welfare. Heavenly rulers!
How have our Britons merited this shame?
Have we with fell ambition, like the Romans,
Unpeopled realms, and made the world a desert?
Have we your works defaced, or how deserved
So large a measure of your bitterest wrath,
That you should clothe this spirit of a wolf
In human form, and blend her lot with ours?
Boad. Beset with perils as I am, pursued
By rout and havoc to the encircling toil;
Untamed by this reverse, my lofty soul,
Upbraiding still thy arrogance, demands,
Who spared the captive Romans? Who provoked
My just resentment? Who, in power, in name,
And dignity inferior, but elate
With blind presumption, and by envy stung,
Dared to dispute with me supreme command,
Then pale and trembling turned his back on danger?
Ven. Oh, once united by the friendliest ties,
And leaders both of nations, shall this land
Still view its bulwarks, tottering with disunion,

Enhance the public and their own misfortunes?
Thou, my complacent lord, were wont to smooth
That manly front, at Pity's just complaint;
And thou, entrusted with a people's welfare,
A queen and warrior, let disdain no more
Live in the midst of danger—See Venusia
Upon her knees——
Dum. Shall thy perfections kneel
To this——
Ven. Oh! stop, nor give resentment utterance.
In such a cause the proudest knee might sue
To less than Boadicea—Turn not from me!
[*To* BOAD.
Look on a prostrate sister; think, thou hear'st
Our children's plaintive notes enforce my prayer,
And Albion's genius mix his solemn moan;
That lamentations through thy ears resound,
From all the wives and mothers of those thousands,
Whose limbs lie stretched on yonder field of death;
Those wretched wives and mothers, oh! reflect,
But for the fatal discord of this day,
With other looks, with other cries and gestures,
With different transports, and with different tears,
Might have received their sons and husbands home,
Than they will now survey their pale remains,
Which there lie mangled by the Roman sword,
To feed the raven's hunger—yet relent!
Yet let restoring union close our wounds,
And to repair this ruin be thy praise!
Dum. Rise, rise. Thy mildness, whose persuasive charm
No cruelty, but hers, could hear unmoved,
In vain would render placable and wise
That malice, inhumanity, and frenzy,
Which have already wasted such a store
Of glory and success.
Boad. Oh!
Dum. Dost thou groan?
Boad. No, no, I do not feel a moment's pain.
Dum. Thy words are false. Thy heart o'erflows with anguish.
Boad. No, I despise both thee and fortune still.
Dum. By Heaven, I know distraction rends thy soul,
And to its view presents the approaching scene
Of shame and torture, when the indignant Romans
Exact a tenfold vengeance for their sufferings;
And when thou passest through their streets in chains,
The just derision of insulting foes,
A frantic woman, who resigned her hopes,
And, to indulge an empty pride, betrayed
Her children, friends, and country; then recal,
What once was Boadicea, fallen how low
From all her honours, by her folly fallen
From power, from empire, victory, and glory,
To vilest bonds, and ignominious stripes.
Boad. May curses blast thee, worse than I can utter,
And keener pangs than whips or shackles seize thee!
Ven. Oh! sister, how unseemly is this rage!
Whom dost thou load with these ungenerous curses?
Thy faithful friend, thy counsellor and brother,
Whom thou hast injured, injured past the power
Of reparation. Dost thou call for whips
To print those venerable limbs with shame,
For bonds to humble that majestic head,
Which foes themselves must honour? Yet, if chains
Must be our fate, what cruel hand hath forged them,
But thine alone? Thy hand hath heaped destruction
On him, thy once revered ally, on me,
On my poor children, guiltless of offence,
And on thy own, who claimed protection from thee;
Yet thou, obdurate, to thy rage a prey,
Dost chide remorse and pity from thy breast.
Dum. Source of thy own afflictions! to behold thee [*To* BOADICEA.
Distracted thus, thus fallen and lost, to see
Thus strongly painted on thy labouring features
The pangs thou feel'st within, awakes compassion.
Boad. Ha! no——divine Andate shall uphold me
Above thy pity. Think'st thou, Boadicea
Is thus deserted by her patron goddess,
Thus void of all resources? Think so still,
And be deceived. Even now I feel her aid;
[*Aside.*
I feel her here; the warlike queen inspires
My pregnant soul; the mighty plan is forming;
It grows, it labours in my ardent bosom;
It springs to life, and calls for instant action;
Lead on, exert thee, goddess! till the furies,
Which heretofore have thundered at thy heels,
Start at the new-born horrors of this night.
[*Exit.*
Ven. Oh! Dumnorix, how virtue hath recoiled
Upon itself! my interposing pity,
Thy manly firmness in a generous act,
Gave these disasters being.
Dum. I forbid thee
To blame thy virtues, which the gods approve,
And I revere. Now leave me to concert,
With our surviving chiefs, the means of safety.
Ven. Oh! that, like me compliant, at thy word,
Peace, a benign companion, would attend,
And moderate thy cares, while I depart! [*Exit.*
Dum. Have I been guilty? answer me, my heart,
Who now wouldst burst my agonizing breast—
Hath Dumnorix been guilty? Wilt thou, Britain,
To me impute the horrors of this day?
Perhaps a Roman's policy had yielded,
And to a colleague's cruelty and pride
Had sacrificed humanity and justice:
I did not so, and Albion is destroyed.

Yet, oh, be witness, all ye generous spirits,
So lately breathing in those heaps of death,
That in this day's extremity and peril,
Your Dumnorix was mindful of his charge;
My shivered javelin, my divided shield,
And blunted sword, be witness for your master,
You were not idle in that dreadful hour;
Nor even amid the carnage piled around me,
Will I relinquish my pursuit of hope—
Hope may elude me—For myself I fear not—
But my Venusia—Ha! prepare, my soul—
There is thy struggle, on her tender mind
To graft thy firmness, which can welcome death,
And hold it gain, when liberty is lost. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter DUMNORIX.

Dum. Till good Tenantius and the rest return,
I have been led by solitary care
To yon dark branches, spreading o'er the brook,
Which murmurs through the camp; this mighty camp,
Where once two hundred thousand sons of war,
With restless din, awaked the midnight hour.
Now horrid stillness in the vacant tents
Sits undisturbed; and these incessant rills,
Whose pebbled channel breaks their shallow stream,
Fill with their melancholy sound my ears,
As if I wandered like a lonely hind,
O'er some dead fallow, far from all resort:
Unless that, ever and anon, a groan
Bursts from a soldier, pillowed on his shield
In torment, or expiring with his wounds,
And turns my fixed attention into horror.
Venusia comes—The hideous scene around me
Now prompts the hard but necessary duty.—
Yet how to name thee, death, without thy terrors!

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Thou didst enjoin my absence. I departed.
With ill-timed care if now returning—
Dum. No.
Ven. Alas! deep-plunged in sadness still I find thee.
Dum. Dost thou? Come nearer. Thou hast seen this day,
ow thy perfidious, thy inveterate sister
ath stained my glory, and my fortune baffled;
hou hast received me vanquished, who before
as used to greet thee with the sound of conquest.
ow tell me truly; am I still the same
my Venusia's eyes?
Ven. What means my lord?
Dum. Am I still loved and honoured, as before?
Ven. Canst thou supect that fortune rules my love?
Thy power and honours may be snatched away,
Thy wide possessions pass to other lords,
And frowning heaven resume whate'er it gave;
All but my love, which ne'er shall know decay,
But ev'n in ruin shall augment its fondness.
Dum. Then will my dictates be regarded still.
Ven. Impart this moment thy revered commands;
And if it prove within my slender power
To ease thy troubles, I will bless the gods,
And, unrepining, to our fate submit.
Dum. Think not my own calamities distress me;
I can encounter Fortune's utmost malice:
But, oh! for thee, Venusia—
Ven. Do not fear.
While in these faithful arms I hold my lord,
I never shall complain. Let every ill,
Let ruin and captivity o'ertake me,
With thee I will be happy.
Dum. Ha! Venusia!
Could thou and I find happiness together,
Deprived of freedom? Dost thou mark?
Ven. I do.
Dum. Thou art most fair; but could thy lovely face
Make slavery look comely? Could the touch
Of that soft hand convey delight to mine,
With servile fetters on?
Ven. Why dost thou gaze
Thus stedfastly upon me?
Dum. I would have thee
Reflect once more upon the loss of freedom.
Ven. It is the heaviest, sure, of human woes.
Dum. Learn one thing more, and, though relentless Heaven
Its care withdraws from this ill-destined isle,
Thou, in the fall of nations, shalt be safe.
Oh! heed, Venusia! never did thy welfare
Raise in my breast such tender cares before;
Else from the public danger would I spare
These precious moments to assist thy virtue?
Ven. Thou mak'st me all attention!
Dum. Reach thy hand.
Now, while I hold thee, do I bless Andate,
That this free hand, protected by my sword,
Hath not yet known the shameful doom of bondage.

Ven. Nor shall I know it; thy unshaken valour
Will be my safeguard still.
Dum. If fate confounds
My utmost efforts, can I then protect thee?
Ven. Why dost thou leave me to despair? Why fill
My breast with terrors? Never did I see thee,
Till this sad hour, thus hopeless and dejected.
Oh! how shall I, a woman, weak and fearful,
Sustain my portion of the general woe,
If thou, in perils exercised and war,
Dost to ill fortune bow thy gallant spirit?
Dum. Think not, Venusia, I abandon hope.
No, on the verge of ruin will I stand,
And, dauntless, combat with our evil fate;
Nor till its rancour bear me to the bottom,
My soul shall ever entertain despair:
But as the wisest and the best resolved
Cannot controul the doubtful chance of war,
I would prepare thee for the worst event.
Ven. Fly where thou wilt, my faithful steps shall follow.
I can pursue thy course with naked feet,
Though roaming o'er the rough and pointed crags,
Or through the pathless tract of deepest woods;
By thy dear hand supported, would I pass
Through the cold snow, which hides the mountain's brow,
And o'er the frozen surface of the vale.
Dum. Thou best of women! I believe thou wouldst:
Believe thy constant heart would teach those limbs,
Thus soft and gentle, to support all hardship,
And hold with me society in toil.
But should we want the wretched power to fly,
What then?
Ven. What then?
Dum. The Romans may surround us.
Ven. How wouldst thou act in such a dreadful season?
Dum. Ne'er shall the hands of Dumnorix endure
The shame of fetters; ne'er shall Rome behold
This breast, which honourable war hath seamed,
Pant with the load of bondage: generous wounds!
Ye deep engraven characters of glory,
Ye faithful monitors of Albion's cause,
Oft, when your midnight anguish had rebuked
Oblivious slumber from my watchful pillow,
And in her danger kept my virtue waking;
You, when that office can avail no more,
Will look more graceful on my death-cold bosom,
Than to be shewn before the scoffing Romans,
Should they behold that Dumnorix in shackles,
Whom they once dreaded in the field of war.
Ven. Assist me, Heaven!
Dum. Speak out. I watch to hear thee.
My powers are all suspended with attention.
Ven. What shall I do!
Dum. Explain thy thoughts.
Ven. I cannot.
Dum. Why canst thou not? Remember who thou art,
And who thy husband is.
Ven. The first of men,
Joined to the least deserving of her sex.
Dum. View thy own heart; be conscious of thy merit;
And, in his strength confiding, be secure,
That thou art worthy of the greatest man,
And not unequal to the noblest task.
Ven. Oh, I will struggle to assert that claim!
Yet, dearest lord, extend thy whole indulgence,
Nor undeserving of thy love esteem me,
While trembling thus.
Dum. I know thy native softness.
Yet wherefore dost thou tremble? Speak, my love.
Ven. Oh, I have not thy courage, not been used,
Like thee, to meet the dreadful shape of death;
I never felt the anguish of a wound;
Thy arm hath still kept danger at a distance:
If now it threatens, and my heart no more
Must beat with safety, it is new to me.
Dum. It is, my love. My tenderness implies
No expectation, that thy gentle mind
Should be at once familiarized with fate.
Not insurmountable I hold our danger.
But to provide against delusive fortune,
That thou may'st bear, unterrified, the lot,
Which best shall suit thy dignity and name,
Demands thy care; take counsel of thy virtue.
Ven. I will.
Dum. And arm thy breast with resolution.
Ven. Indeed I will, and ask the gracious gods
To fill my heart with constancy and spirit,
And shew me worthy of a man, like thee:
Perhaps their succour, thy revered injunction,
And high example, may controul my terrors.
But, Oh! what power shall soothe another care,
Than life more precious, and a keener pang
Than death's severest agony, relieve;
The sad remembrance of my helpless infants,
Our love's dear pledges, who before me rise
In orphan woe, defenceless and forsaken,
And all my borrowed fortitude dissolve!
Dum. Thou perfect pattern of maternal fondness,
And conjugal compliance, rest assured,
That care was never absent from my soul.
Confide in me; thy children shall be safe.
Ven. How safe?
Dum. Shall live in safety. Thou shalt know.
Mean time retire. Our anxious chiefs, returned,
Wait my commands, and midnight is advancing.
[*Exit* VENUSIA.
She goes——her love and duty will surmount
This hideous task——Oh, morning, bright in hope,
Closed by a night of horror, which reduces
This poor——dear woman, yet in blooming years,
Blessed in her husband, in her offspring blessed,
Perhaps to cut her stem of being short
With her own tender hand——if ever tears
Might sort with valour, nor debase a soldier,
It would be now——Ha! whither do I plunge?

Enter EBRANCUS, TENANTIUS, *and Trinobantians.*

Dum. Well, my brave friends, what tidings?
Ebran. Through thy quarter,
With weary steps, and mourning, have we traversed
A silent desert of unpeopled tents,
Quite to the distant station of the Icenians.
Their chiefs we found in council round the queen;
The multitude was arming: twenty thousand
Were yet remaining, and unhurt by war,
Unlike our Trinobantians, who, unaided,
The fatal onset bore. Those huge battalions,
Which Rome so dreaded, are, alas! no more.
Dum. Be not dejected. Far the greater part
Are fled for shelter to their native roofs,
And will rejoin us, when with force repaired
We may dispute our island still with Rome.
But have you gained access to Boadicea?
Ebran. We have.
Dum. What said she?
Ebran. She approved thy counsel.
Dum. You told her, then, my purpose to retreat
Through yonder forest?
Ebran. To herself alone
We told it.
Dum. I commend you. You have saved us
A conference, both needless and unpleasing.
Ebran. She further bade us note, how all the Icenians
Were then in arms, and ready to advance.
Dum. Return, and tell her, (let thy phrase, Ebrancus,
Be soft and humble,) ere two hours be wasted,
We must begin our march. Do you explore
[*To the other Trinobantians.*
The secret passage, and with winged haste
Bring back your tidings. Thou, Tenantius, wait:
[*Exeunt* EBRANCUS *and Trinobantians.*
To thee my inmost bosom I must open,
And to thy friendship trust my tenderest cares.
Thou must pursue thy journey, heed me well,
Quite through the forest——Dost thou know the pass?
Tenan. Yes; where those gushing waters leave the grove,
To seek the valley deeper in the shade,
From the same fountain flows a smaller brook,
Whose secret channel through the thicket winds,
And will conduct me farther down the vale——
Dum. Which once attained, proceed and gain my dwelling.
Give me thy honest hand. Come nearer, soldier,
Thy faithful bosom would I clasp to mine——
Perhaps thy general and thou may never
Embrace again.
Tenan. What means my fearless chief?
Why hast thou called this unaccustomed moisture
Into thy soldier's eyes?
Dum. Thou dost not weep,
My gallant veteran! I have been to blame.
A tenderness, resulting from a care,
Which struggles here, subdued me for a moment.
This shall be soon discharged, and all be well.
I have two boys: if, after all my efforts,
(I speak, not prompted by despair, but caution)
Rome should prevail against me, and our hopes
Abortive fall, take thou these helpless infants;
With thee transport them to our northern frontiers,
And hide them deep in Caledonian woods.
There, in their growing years, excite and cherish
The dear remembrance of their native fields;
That, to redeem them from the Italian spoiler,
If e'er some kind occasion should invite,
Forth from their covert they may spring undaunted.
Ne'er let the race of Dumnorix divert
One thought from Albion to their own repose.
Remind them often of their father's toils,
Whom thou leav'st grappling to the last with fortune.
And if beneath this island's mouldering state,
I, to avoid disgraceful chains, must sink,
Fain would my spirit in the hope depart,
That on the ruins, which surround my fall,
A new-born structure may hereafter stand,
Raised by my virtue, living in my sons. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. A hollow sound of tumult strikes my ear;
Perhaps the howl of some night-roaming wolves,
Who, waked by hunger, from their gloomy haunts
Are trooping forth, to make their fell repast
On my fresh-bleeding countrymen, whose limbs
O'erspread the valley. Shall I mourn your fall,
Lost friends, who, couched in death, forget your cares,
I, who may shortly join your ghastly band,
Unless that forest yield its promised aid?
O hope, sweet flatterer! whose delusive touch
Sheds on afflicted minds the balm of comfort,
Relieves the load of poverty, sustains
The captive, bending with the weight of bonds,
And smooths the pillow of disease and pain,
Send back the exploring messenger with joy,
And let me hail thee from that friendly grove!

Enter DUMNORIX.

Dum. Why hast thou left thy couch?
Ven. I heard a sound,
Like tumult at a distance.

Dum. So did I,
As near the opening pass I stood, to watch
Our messenger's return.

Enter EBRANCUS.

What means this haste?
Why lookst thou pale?
Ebran. With thy instructions charged,
I sought the Icenian quarter. All around
Was solitude and silence. When I called,
No voice replied. To Boadicea's tent
With fearful haste I trod. Her daughters there
I found in consternation. I enquired
The cause: they answersd only with their tears;
Till from the princess Emmeline at last
I learned, that all the Icenians were that hour
In silent march departed; but their course
She could not tell me: that her furious mother
Had, with a fell, determined look, enjoined them
To wait her pleasure, which should soon be known;
Mean time to rest immoveable and mute.

Enter an Icenian, carrying a bowl.

Ven. My Dumnorix, defend me!
Dum. Ha! what means
This wild demeanour—wilt thou speak, Icenian?
Fear not, my love; thy Dumnorix is near.
What is that bowl, thou carriest?
Icen. Honoured chief,
If aught appears disordered in my gesture,
Which ill becomes the reverence I owe thee,
Charge that demerit to my horrid errand,
And not to me.
Ven. What will befall us now!
Dum. [*To the Icenean.*] Wilt thou begin?
Icen. I come from Boadicea.
Dum. Where is she?
Icen. Far advanced o'er yonder vale.
Dum. With what intention?
Icen. To assail the Romans.
Dum. Assail the Romans!
Icen. To surprise their camp,
At this dead hour, with unexpected slaughter.
Before she marched, to me this secret charge,
In words like these she gave. 'Observe our course;
'When I have passed the camp's extremest verge,
'Back to my daughters and Venusia speed:
'Tell them, I go our fortune to restore,
'If unsuccessful, never to return.
'Should that stern doom attend me, bid them take
'The last, best gift, which dying I can leave them;
'That of my blood no part may prove dishonoured,
'The Trinobantian, of his Roman friends
'So well deserving, may accept their grace.'
This said, with wild emotion in her breast,
Her visage blackening with despair and horror,
She straight committed to my trembling hands
Two fatal bowls, which flow with poisoned streams:
I have accomplished half my horrid task
With Boadicea's daughters.
Dum. Frantic woman!
Who hopes with fury and despair to match
The vigilance and conduct of Suetonius.
Icen. From this ill-fated hand receive the draught,
Whose hue and odour warrant it the juice
Of that benumbing plant, the Druids gather;
That plant, whose drowsy moisture lulls the sense,
And, with a silent influence, expels
The unresisting spirit from her seat.
Dum. Mistaken woman! did she deem Venusia
Was unprovided of this friendly potion——
Perform thy orders; bear it to my tent.
Thou may'st not want it yet——take comfort, love.

Enter a second Icenian.

2d Icen. Oh! Dumnorix!
Dum. Icenian, spare thy voice.
Thy flight, thy terror, and thy wounds interpret
Too plainly.
2d Icen. We are vanquished.
Dum. I believe thee.
2d Icen. Oh! I have much to tell thee—but I faint.
Dum. [*To* EBRANCUS.] Conduct him hence, and learn the whole event.
[*Exit Icenian, with* EBRANCUS.
Ven. On you, celestial arbiters, we call.
Now as we stand environed by distress,
Now weigh our actions past, deformed, or fair.
If e'er oppression hath defiled his valour,
In help and pity to the woes of others,
Our hearts been scanty, and our hands reserved,
Let our transgressions ratify our doom:
Else with your justice let our merits plead,
To hold its shield before us, and repel
These undeserved misfortunes!
Dum. Heaven may hear,
And through that forest lead us still to safety.
Ha! no; each power against us is combined;
What but their anger, levelled at our heads,
Could bring Tenantius back, so strictly charged
To seek our home—the intercepting foes
Have seized the secret pass.
Ven. Whose guardian care
Now to the gloomy shelter of a desert,
To solitary innocence and peace,
Will guide our friendless orphans?
Dum. True, Venusia,
Through every trial Heaven is pleased to lead us,
Droop not—one comfort never can forsake us.
The mind, to virtue trained, in every state,
Rejoicing, grieving, dying, must possess
The exalted pleasure to exert that virtue.

Enter TENANTIUS.

Ven. Speak, speak, Tenantius!
Tenan. We pursued our course,
But had not travelled far, before we heard

The sound of footsteps dashing through the brook,
Whose winding channel marks the secret way.
Not long we stood in wonder, ere a troop
Of Romans sallied forth, and made us captives.
Dum. Why then, farewell to what was left of hope.
Tenan. Not so, my lord.
Ven. Speak. What resource is left?
Tenan. We were conducted to the Roman leaders;
One fierce and haughty, gentler far the other,
Who calmed his stern companion, gave us comfort,
Named thee with reverence; then, an ardent zeal
Disclosing for thy safety, and requesting
A short, but friendly conference between you,
With courtesy dismissed us.
Ven. Is he near?
Tenan. Hard by he waits for an impatient answer,
Just where the pass is open to the tent.
Dum. What would the Roman!
Ven. Hasten back, Tenantius,
And say, that Dumnorix consents to parley.
Dum. Ha! trust our freedom in a Roman's power?
Tenan. Unarmed and single will the Roman join thee.
Dum. Oh, ineffectual effort!
Ven. Only see him,
If but to parley for thy children's safety.
Weak as I am, unequal to these conflicts,
I would embrace destruction, ere request thee
Once to comply with aught below thy greatness.
Dum. Let him approach.

Enter EBRANCUS.

What hast thou learnt, my soldier?
Ebran. Like ours, the Icenian force is all destroyed.
Dum. And Boadicea?
Ebran. Nought of her I know,
But that she found the Roman host embattled,
Which she had fondly deemed immersed in sleep.
Dum. And so is fallen a victim to her folly.
Retire. [*Exit* EBRANCUS.

Enter FLAMINIUS.

Tenan. [*To* FLAM.] Thy helmet cast aside, restores thee
To my remembrance. Lo! thy benefactors.
Flam. Brave Dumnorix!
Dum. My captive!
Flam. Yes, Flaminius,
Who owes to thy humanity his life,
Dum. Where hast thou hid thee from my notice? Rather,
Whence now return'st, ennobled with command,
No more in thraldom, but a Roman leader?
Flam. Amid the tumult of your late defeat
We sought the adjacent forest; thence we passed
The vale below, and reached the Roman tents.
Dum. And now are masters of our late retreat—
Had I been cruel, Britain had been safe.
Flam. Was this an act unworthy of a soldier?
Dum. Our woes are all the progeny of folly,
Not charged to thee or fortune.
Ven. Heaven, well pleased,
Perhaps ordained this unforeseen event,
That our benevolence to brave Flaminius
Its due return of gratitude should find.
Flam. The life you gave me, to your mutual welfare
I here devote. My influence, my power,
My thoughts, my care, to soften your afflictions,
Shall all combine. Surrender to your friend,
Before Suetonius, with his legions, pours
On your defenceless camp, who long in arms
Hath stood, expecting the appointed signal,
Which he enjoined us with the dawn to rear.
Dum. Though thou didst well, accepting life from me,
That gift from thee must Dumnorix refuse.
Flam. Thou wilt not rob my gratitude of power,
To shew how well thy goodness was bestowed!
Dum. Wouldst thou see me led
A sullen captive, and through haughty Rome,
Inglorious, count my paces to the clink
Of my own chains? This faithful woman too—
Ven. Like thee, disdains a being so preserved.
Flam. Oh, let me water with my tears your feet!
If every drop, which issues from my heart,
Could from the doom you justly scorn secure you,
Before you now the purple sluice should open;
And let my knees, in humblest adoration,
Before such elevated virtue bend.
Oh, god-like Britons! my acknowledged patrons
And benefactors, if my soul retain not
Your memory for ever dear and sacred,
May disappointment, poverty, and shame
Deform my life, and pining sickness close
My youthful eyes untimely in the grave!
Dum. Thou seem'st, of all the Romans, to possess
A heart which feels for others. Rise and hear.
Though we reject the wretched boon of life,
Thou may'st, Flaminius, yet repay our bounty.
Flam. Then will I ask no other grace from Heaven.
Dum. We have two children——
Ven. Oh, my bleeding heart!
My poor, deserted infants, whom these arms
No more must cherish, nor my lulling voice
Hush in the quiet of my sheltering bosom!
Dum. [*Aside.*] Yet shall not this unman me. I will feel
A father's anguish, but conceal the pain.
[*To* FLAM.] Know, then, I meant this faithful friend, Tenantius,
Should traverse yonder wood to reach my dwelling,
Which lies remote, and thence convey my sons
Far from these borders, to extremest north,

Where they might rest secure, nor share the ills
Doomed to their parents. Wilt thou let him pass?
Flam. I will, and Jove be witness to my word!
Dum. Give thy last charge, Venusia, to Tenantius.
One word apart with thee, my Roman friend.
As thou art generous, answer me with truth.
When must thou make thy signal?
Flam. At the dawn,
Whose beams, though faint, already tinge the east.
Dum. What time will bring your legions near this tent?
Flam. An hour at farthest.
Dum. I have heard, Flaminius,
Of your forefathers' spirit, how they fell
Oft on their swords to shun ignoble bondage.
This part have we to act; and, friendly Roman,
When thou shalt see our cold remains—my own
Are little worth attention—Oh, remember
Venusia's goodness, and her gentle clay
Defend from shame and insult!
Flam. Thou dost pierce
My heart—I cannot answer—But believe
These tears sincere.
Dum. Enough. Perform thy promise.
Thy obligations will be then discharged.
Farewell. Fulfil thy general's commands.
[*Exit* FLAMINIUS.
Ven. [*To* TENAN.] Thou future parent of my orphan babes,
Soon as their generous minds imbibe thy precepts,
And thy example warms their budding virtues,
Do not forget to tell them, that no perils,
Nor death in all its terrors, can efface
Maternal love; that their ill-fated mother,
Amid this awful season of distress,
Wept but for them, and lost her fears in fondness.
Dum. We have been long companions, brave Tenantius,
Thy leader I, once fortunate and great,
And thou my faithful and intrepid soldier.
Nay, do not weep; we have not time for wailing.
By thy approved fidelity and love,
Thy chief, just entering death's unfolded gates,
Stops, and once more conjures thee to retain
This his last charge in memory—his children.
[*Exit* TENANTIUS.
The sun is risen. All hail! thou last of days
To this nigh-finished being. Radiant power!
Thou through thy endless journey mayst proclaim,
That Dumnorix died free, for thou shalt view it.
Behold! the appointed signal from the grove,
Just as Flaminius warned us, is upreared,
To call Suetonius and his legions on.
Come Desolation, Tyranny, resort
To thy new seat; come Slavery, and bend
The neck of Albion, all her sons debase,
And ancient virtue from their hearts expel!
Now, then, ye honoured mansions of our fathers,
Ye hallowed altars, and ye awful groves,
The habitation of our gods, farewell!
And yet the guilty authoress of these woes
Deserves a share of praise, who, still retaining
One unextinguished spark of generous honour,
Scorned to remain spectatress or partaker
Of Albion's fall, and, dying, still is free.
Need I say more, Venusia?
This last embrace. And now prepare, Venusia.
Ven. Oh, my lord!
Dum. Why heaves that sigh?
Ven. Alas, I am a woman!
Dum. True, a defenceless woman, and exposed
To keener sorrow by thy matchless beauty;
That charm, which captivates the victor's eye,
Yet, helpless to withstand his savage force,
Throws wretched woman under double ruin.
But wherefore this? Thy virtue knows its duty.
Ven. Stay but a little!
Dum. Would I might for years!
But die that thought!—False tenderness away!
Thou British genius, who art now retiring
From this lost region, yet suspend thy flight,
And in this conflict lend me all thy spirit——
We only ask thee to be free and die. [*Aside.*
Well, my Venusia, is thy soul resolved,
Or shall I still afford a longer pause?
Ven. Though my weak sex by nature is not armed
With fortitude like thine, of this be sure,
That dear subjection to thy honoured will,
Which hath my life directed, even in death
Shall not forsake me; and thy faithful wife
Shall with obedience meet thy last commands.
But canst thou tell me—Is it hard to die?
Dum. Oh! rather ask me, if to live in shame,
Captivity and sorrow, be not hard?
Ven. Oh, miserable!
Dum. In a foreign land
The painful toils of servitude to bear
From an imperious mistress?
Ven. Dreadful thought!
Dum. Or be insulted with the hateful love
Of some proud master?
Ven. Oh proceed
No further!
Dum. From thy native seat of dwelling,
From all the known endearments of thy home,
From parents, children, friends, and—husband torn!——
Ven. Stop there, and reach the potion; nor to drink
The cure of troubles will I longer pause.
[*Exit* DUMNORIX.
For every past possession of delight,
Both in my offspring and their godlike sire,
A dying matron bends her grateful knee,
Ye all-disposing powers! as now these blessings
Must reach their period, to my sons transfer
That copious goodness, I have shared so long!
Through my resigning soul that promise breathe,

And my last moments comfort thus with peace!

Re-enter DUMNORIX *with a bowl.*

Dum. [*Aside, seeing* VENUSIA *on her knees.*] Hold, resolution; now be doubly armed.
[*He gives her the bowl, and she drinks.*
Now stand awhile before the fanning breeze;
So, with its subtile energy, the potion,
Less rudely stealing on the powers of life,
Will best perform its office, to remove
Pain, fear, and grief, for ever from thy breast.
Dost thou not feel already every terror
Begin to lessen? that a calm succeeds
Within thy bosom, banishing the sense
Of present pain, and fear of future woes?
How dost thou fare, Venusia?

Ven. I perceive
No alteration; every sense remains.
Yet unimpaired. Then, while these moments last,
Let me on thee direct my eyes to gaze,
While unobstructed still their sight endures;
Let me receive thee to my faithful bosom,
Before my heart is motionless and cold.
Speak to me, Dumnorix, my lord, my husband!
Give one kind accent to thy dying wife,
Ere yet my ears be frozen, and thy voice
Be heard no longer; join thy lip to mine,
While I can feel thy last and tenderest kisses.

Dum. Yes, I will utter to thy dying ear
All my fond heart, sustain thee on my bosom,
And cheer thy parting spirit in its flight.
Oh, wheresoe'er thy fleeting breath shall pass,
Whate'er new body, as the Druids sing,
Thou shalt inform hereafter, still thy soul,
Thou gentle, kind, and ever-pleasing creature,
Shall bear its own felicity along,
Still in its native sweetness shall be blessed,
And in its virtue, which can thus subdue
The fear of death, still brave the power of fortune!
But thou begin'st to droop!

Ven. My eyes grow dizzy.

Dum. Keep firm, my heart! [*Aside.*

Ven. A heaviness, like sleep,
O'ercomes my senses—Every limb is faint——
Thy voice is scarce distinguished in my ears.

Dum. Indeed!

Ven. Alas! thou look'st so kindly on me!
My weak and darkened sight deceives me sure,
Or thy fond eye did never yet o'erflow
With tenderness like this.

Dum. I never viewed thee
For the last time.

Ven. Look, look upon me still——
Why dost thou turn thy face away?

Dum. For nothing.

Ven. Nay thou art weeping, Dumnorix—And wherefore
Wouldst thou conceal thy tears?

Dum. I cannot hide them.

Ven. And dost thou weep?

Dum. I do.

Ven. Then didst thou love me
With such excess of fondness? For Venusia
Do these soft streams bedew that awful face?

Dum. Love thee! Behold, when Albion groans around me,
Yet thou these springs of tenderness canst open,
To wet the cheeks of British Dumnorix.

Ven. Oh, extacy! which stops my parting soul,
And gives it vigour to enjoy these transports!—
Once more receive me to thy breast.

Dum. Venusia!

Ven. Thy tenderness makes death delightful to me——
Oh, I would speak!—would answer to thy kindness——
My faultering tongue——

Dum. What sayst thou?

Ven. Cease to grieve——
No pain molests me—every pain is calm——
Support my drowsy burthen to that couch——
Where death—serenely smiles.
[*He bears her off.*

Enter FLAMINIUS, *speaking to the Romans behind the scene.*

Flam. My warlike friends,
Keep back—Our troops on every side advance;
I cannot long controul them. Yet I tremble
To enter there——By Heaven, he lives and sees me!

Re-enter DUMNORIX, *with his sword drawn.*

Dum. Importunate Flaminius! art thou come
To rob my dying moments of their quiet?

Flam. Forgive the crime of ignorance—Forgive,
Since accident hath joined us once again,
If strong compassion at thy fate yet pleads——

Dum. What! when Venusia is no more?

Flam. No more!

Dum. No; and be further lessoned by a Briton,
Who, since his union with the best of women,
Hath never known an interval of love,
And at this solemn pause yet melts in fondness;
While death's black curtain shrouds my cold Venusia,
Of dearer value doth my soul esteem her,
Than should those eyes rekindle into lustre,
And every charm revive with double power
Of winning beauty, if alone to shine
Amid the gloom of bondage.

Flam. I will urge
No more. Farewell—our legions hover nigh.
[*Exit.*

Dum. Now in my breast resume thy wonted seat,
Thou manly firmness, which so oft has borne me
Through every toil and danger. Oh, return,
Rise o'er my sorrow, and complete thy last,
Thy highest task, to close a life of glory—
They come!—Be swift, my sword—By thee to fall,
Near that dear clay extended, best becomes
A soldier's courage, and a husband's love.
[*Exit.*

Enter ENOBARBUS, FLAMINIUS, *and Romans.*

Enob. To Boadicea's quarter I advanced,

At thy request, who, since her last defeat,
Blind with despair and disappointed fury,
Fled to her tent; expiring, there, I found her,
With one ill-fated daughter, both by poison;
Nor had the friendly Emmeline escaped,
But by the swift prevention of my hand.
Dost thou not thank me, whose suggestion prompted
Our quick return to seize the secret pass?
Thou gav'st me freedom: love and fame repay thee.

Flam. If thou could'st add, that Dumnorix survived——

Enob. [*Looking into the tent.*] Thou seest the gods have otherwise decreed.
Forbear to mingle vain regret with conquest.
He hath done nobly. Fair befall his urn!
Death is his triumph, which a captive life
Had forfeited to Rome, with all the praise
Now from the virtuous to his ashes due.

Flam. Then art thou fallen at last, thou mighty tower,
And more than Roman edifice of glory?
See, too, Venusia, pale in death's embrace,
Presents her faded beauties. Lovely ruin!
Of every grace and virtue once the seat!
The last kind office from my hand receive,
Which shall unite thee to thy husband's side,
And to one grave your mingling reliques trust.
There soon a hallowed monument shall rise;
Insculptured laurel with the myrtle twined,
The well-wrought stone adorning, shall proclaim
His generous valour, and thy faithful love.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY FLAMINIUS.

Now we have shewn the fatal fruits of strife,
A hero bleeding with a virtuous wife,
A field of war, embrued with nations' gore,
Which to the dust the hopes of Albion bore:
If weak description, and the languid flow
Of strains unequal to this theme of woe,
Have failed to move the sympathising breast,
And no soft eyes their melting sense express'd,
Not all the wit this after-scene might share,
Can give success where you refus'd a tear.
Much less, if haply still the poet's art
Hath stol'n persuasive to the feeling heart,
Will he, with Fancy's wanton hand, efface
From gen'rous minds, compassion's pleasing trace;
Nor from their thoughts, while pensive they pursue
This maze of sorrow, snatch the moral clue.
If yet to him those pow'rs of sacred song,
To melt the heart and raise the mind, belong,
Dar'd he to hope this sketch of early youth
Might stand th' award of nature and of truth;
Encouraged thus, hereafter might he soar
With double strength, and loftier scenes explore,
And, following Fortune through her various wiles,
Shew struggling Virtue dress'd in tears or smiles;
Perhaps his grateful labours would requite
With frequent offerings one propitious night.

THE

EARL OF ESSEX

BY

JONES.

PROLOGUE.

OUR desp'rate bard a bold excursion tries,
Though danger damp'd his wings, he dares to rise:
From hope, high rais'd, all glorious actions spring;
'Tis hence that heroes conquer, poets sing.
Even he may feel the soul-exalting fire,
Fame prompts the humblest bosom to aspire.
Without a guide this rash attempt he made,
Without a clue from art, or learning's aid.
He takes a theme where tend'rest passions glow,
A theme your grandsires felt with pleasing woe.
Essex' sad tale he strives to clothe anew,
And hopes to place it in a stronger view.
Poets, like painters, may, by equal law,
The labour'd piece from different masters draw;
Perhaps improve the plan, add fire and grace,
And strike the impassion'd soul through all the face.
How far our author has secur'd a claim
To this exalted palm, this wish'd-for fame,
Your gen'rous sentiments will soon declare:
Humanity is ever prone to spare.
'Twere baseness then your candour to distrust;
A British audience will at least be just.
A flattering truth he fearful must confess,
His sanguine friends made promise of success;
But that he fears, their ardent wishes wrought,
Since partial favour seldom sees a fault.
Then hear, like patient friends, this first essay,
His next shall thank you in a nobler way.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Earl of ESSEX.	*Queen* ELIZABETH.
SOUTHAMPTON.	RUTLAND.
BURLEIGH.	NOTTINGHAM.
RALEIGH.	
Lieutenant.	

SCENE,—*London.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Antechamber in the Palace.*

Enter BURLEIGH *and* RALEIGH.

Bur. THE bill, at length, has pass'd opposing numbers,
Whilst crowds, seditious, clamour'd round the senate,
And headlong faction urg'd its force within.
Ral. It has, my lord!—The wish'd-for day is come,
When this proud idol of the people's hearts
Shall now no more be worshipp'd.—Essex falls.
My lord, the minute's near, that shall unravel
The mystic schemes of this aspiring man.
Now Fortune, with officious hand, invites us
To her, and opens wide the gates of greatness,
The way to power. My heart exults; I see,
I see, my lord, our utmost wish accomplish'd!
I see great Cecil shine without a rival,
And England bless him, as her guardian saint.
Such potent instruments I have prepar'd,
As shall, with speed, o'erturn this hated man,
And dash him down, by proof invincible.
Bur. His day of glory now is set in night;
And all my anxious hopes, at last, are crown'd.
Those proofs against him, Raleigh—
Ral. All arrived.
Bur. Arrived! how? when?
Ral. This very hour, my lord:
Nay more, a person comes, of high distinction,
To prove some secret treaties made by Essex,
With Scotland's monarch and the proud Tyrone.
Bur. How say'st? to prove them?
Ral. Ay, my lord, and back'd
With circumstances of a stronger nature.
It now appears, his secretary, Cuff,
With Blunt and Lee, were deep concern'd in this
Destructive scheme, contriv'd to raise this lord,
And ruin Cecil. Oh, it is a subtle,
A deep-laid mischief, by the earl contriv'd
In hour malignant, to o'erturn the state,
And, horror to conceive! dethrone the queen!
Bur. These gladsome tidings fly beyond my hopes!
The queen will listen now, will now believe,
And trust the counsel of her faithful Burleigh.
Dispose them well, till kind occasion calls
Their office forth; lest prying craft meanwhile
May tamper with their thoughts, and change their minds:
Let them, like batteries conceal'd, appear
At once, both to surprise and to destroy.
Ral. His headstrong friend, the bold Southampton, too,
Now finds his rash endeavours all defeated;
And storms at thee, and the impeaching commons.
Bur. Let him rave on, and rage.—The lion, in
The toils entangled, wastes his strength, and roars
In vain; his efforts but amuse me now.—

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. My lord, the lady Nottingham desires,
With much impatience, to attend your lordship.
Bur. What may the purport of her business be?
Her tender wishes are to Essex tied
In love's soft fetters, and endearing bands:
Conduct her in. [*Exit Gentleman.*
And you, my Raleigh, watch Southampton's steps;
With care observe each movement of his friends;
That no advantage on that side be lost.
[*Exit* RALEIGH.
Southampton's Essex' second self;
His daring heart, and bold ungovern'd tongue,
Are both enlisted in the rash designs
Of this proud lord, nor knows a will but his:
A limb so fix'd, must with the body fall.

Enter Lady NOTTINGHAM.

Not. Thrice hail to rescu'd England's guiding genius!
His country's guardian, and his queen's defence.
Great Burleigh, thou whose patriot bosom beats
With Albion's glory, and Eliza's fame;
Who shield'st her person, and support'st her throne;
For thee, what fervent thanks, what offer'd vows,
Do prostrate millions pay!
Bur. Bright excellence,
This fair applause too highly overrates,
Too much extols, the low deserts of Cecil.
Not. What praises are too high for patriot worth;
Or what applause exceeds the price of virtue?
My lord, conviction has at last subdu'd me,
And I am honour's proselyte:—Too long
My erring heart pursu'd the ways of faction;
I own myself t' have been your bitt'rest foe,
And join'd with Essex in each foul attempt
To blast your honour, and traduce your fame.
Bur. Though ne'er my wishing heart could call you friend,
Yet honour and esteem I always bore you;
And never meant, but with respect to serve you.
Not. It is enough, my lord, I know it well,
And feel rekindling virtue warm my breast;
Honour and gratitude their force resume
Within my heart, and every wish is yours.
O Cecil, Cecil, what a foe hast thou!
A deadly foe, whilst hated Essex lives!
Bur. I know it well—but can assign no cause.
Not. Ambition's restless hand has wound his thoughts
Too high for England's welfare; nay, the queen
Scarce sits in safety on her throne, while he,

Th' audacious Essex, freely treads at large,
And breathes the common air. Ambition is
The only god he serves; to whom he'd sacrifice
His honour, country, friends, and every tie
Of truth, and bond of nature; nay, his love.
Bur. The man, that in his public duty fails,
On private virtue will disdainful tread;
And mighty love, who rules all nature else,
Must follow here, in proud ambition's train.
Not. Pronounce it not! my soul abhors the sound
Like death.——O, Cecil, will you kindly lend
Some pity to a wretch like me?
Bur. Command,
Madam; my power and will are yours.
Not. Will Cecil's friendly ear vouchsafe to bend
Its great attention to a woman's wrongs;
Whose pride and shame, resentment and despair,
Rise up in raging anarchy at once,
To tear, with ceaseless pangs, my tortur'd soul?
Words are unequal to the woes I feel;
And language lessens what my heart endures.
Bur. Madam, your wrongs, I must confess, are great;
Yet still, I fear, you know not half his falsehood.
Who, that had eyes to look on beauty;
Who, but the false, perfidious Essex could
Prefer to Nottingham a Rutland's charms?
Start not!—By Heaven, I tell you naught but truth,
What I can prove, past doubt; that he receiv'd
The lady Rutland's hand, in sacred wedlock,
The very night before his setting out
For Ireland.
Not. Oh! may quick destruction seize them!
May furies blast, and hell destroy their peace!
May all their nights——
Bur. I pray, have patience, madam!
Restrain a while your rage; curses are vain,
But there's a surer method to destroy him;
And, if you'll join with me, 'tis done—he falls.
Not. Ha! say'st thou, Burleigh! Speak, my genius, speak!
Be quick as vengeance' self to tell me how!
Bur. You must have heard, the commons have impeach'd him,
And we have proofs sufficient for his ruin.
But the queen—you know how fair he stands
In her esteem; and Rutland, too, his wife,
Hath full possession of the royal ear.
Here then, my Nottingham, begins thy task:
Try ev'ry art t' incense the queen against him,
Then step between her and the lady Rutland:
Observe Southampton, too, with jealous eye;
Prevent, as much as possible, his suit;
For, well I know, he will not fail to try
His eloquence on the behalf of Essex.
Not. It shall be done; his doom is fix'd: he dies.
Oh, 'twas a precious thought! I never knew
Such heartfelt satisfaction.—Essex dies!
And Rutland, in her turn, shall learn to weep.
The time is precious; I'll about it strait.
Come, vengeance, come! assist me now to breathe
Thy venom'd spirit in the royal ear! [*Exit.*
Bur. There spoke the very genius of the sex!
A disappointed woman sets no bounds
To her revenge.—Her temper's form'd to serve me.

Enter RALEIGH.

Ral. The lord Southampton, with ungovern'd rage,
Resents aloud his disappointed measures.
I met him in the outward court; he seeks,
In haste, your lordship; and, forgetting forms,
Pursues me hither, and demands to see you.
Bur. Raleigh, 'tis well! Withdraw—attend the queen—
Leave me to deal with this o'erbearing man.
[*Exit* RALEIGH.

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

South. Where is the man, whom virtue calls her friend?—
I give you joy, my lord!—Your quenchless fury
At length prevails,—and now your malice triumphs.
You've hunted honour to the toil of faction,
And view his struggles with malicious joy.
Bur. What means my lord?
South. O fraud! shall valiant Essex
Be made a sacrifice to your ambition!
Oh, it smells foul, indeed, of rankest malice,
And the vile statesman's craft. You dare not, sure,
Thus bid defiance to each show of worth,
Each claim of honour: dare not injure thus
Your suffering country, in her bravest son!
Bur. But why should stern reproach her angry brow
Let fall on me? Am I alone the cause
That gives this working humour strength? Do I
Instruct the public voice to warp his actions?
Justice, untaught, shall poise th' impartial scales,
And every curious eye may mark the beam.
South. The specious shield, which private malice bears,
Is ever blazon'd with some public good;
Behind that artful fence, skulk low, conceal'd,
The bloody purpose, and the poison'd shaft;
Ambition there, and envy, nestle close;
From whence they take their fatal aim unseen;
And honest merit is their destin'd mark.
Bur. My country's welfare, and my queen's command,
Have ever been my guiding stars through life,
My sure direction still,—To these I now
Appeal;—from these, no doubt, this lord's misconduct
Hath wildly stray'd; and reason, not reviling,
Must now befriend his cause.
South. How ill had Providence
Dispos'd the suffering world's oppress'd affairs,
Had sacred right's eternal rule been left
To crafty politicians' partial sway!

Then power and pride would stretch th' enormous grasp,
And call their arbitrary portion, justice:
Ambition's arm, by av'rice urg'd, would pluck
The core of honesty from Virtue's heart,
And plant deceit and rancour in its stead:
Falsehood would trample then on Truth and Honour,
And Envy poison sweet Benevolence.
Oh, 'tis a goodly group of attributes,
And well befits some statesman's righteous rule!
Out, out upon such bloody doings!
The term of being is not worth the sin;
No human bosom can endure its dart.
Then put this cruel purpose from thee far,
Nor let the blood of Essex whelm thy soul.

Bur. 'Tis well, my lord! your words no comment need;
No doubt, they've well explain'd your honest meaning;
'Tis clear and full.—To parts, like yours, discretion
Would be a clog, and caution but incumbrance.
Yet mark me well, my lord, the clinging ivy
With th' oak may rise, but with it too must fall.

South. Thy empty threats, ambitious man, hurt not
The breast of truth. Fair innocence, and faith,
Those strangers to thy practis'd heart, shall shield
My honour, and preserve my friend. In vain,
Thy malice, with unequal arm, shall strive
To tear the applauded wreath from Essex' brow;
His honest laurel, held aloft by fame,
Above thy blasting reach, shall safely flourish,
And bloom immortal to the latest times;
Whilst thou, amidst thy tangling snares involv'd,
Shalt sink confounded, and unpitied fall.

Bur. Rail on, proud lord, and give thy choler vent:
It wastes itself in vain; the queen shall judge
Between us in this warm debate. To her
I now repair: and, in her royal presence,
You may approve your innocence and faith.
Perhaps you'll meet me there.—Till then, farewell. [*Exit.*

South. Confusion wait thy steps, thou cruel monster!
My noble and illustrious friend betray'd
By crafty faction, and tyrannic power,
His sinking trophies, and his falling fame,
Oppress my very soul. I'll to the queen,
Lay all their envy open to her view,
Confront their malice, and preserve my friend.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Presence Chamber.*

The Queen discovered, sitting on her Throne. RALEIGH, *Lords, und Attendants.*

Qu. Eliz. Without consulting me! presumptuous man!
Who governs here?—What! am not I your queen?
You dar'd not, were he present, take this step.

Ral. Dread sovereign, your ever faithful commons
Have, in their gratitude and love for you,
Preferred this salutary bill against him.

Enter BURLEIGH.

Qu. Eliz. You, my Lord Burleigh, must have known of this.
The commons here impeach the earl of Essex
Of practising against the state and me.
Methinks I might be trusted with the secret.
Speak, for I know it well, 'twas thy contrivance.
Ha! was it not? You dare not say it was not.

Bur. I own my judgment did concur with theirs.
His crimes, I fear, will justify the charge,
And vindicate their loyalty and mine.

Qu. Eliz. Ha! tell not me your smooth deceitful story!
I know your projects, and your close cabals.
You'd turn my favour into party feuds,
And use my sceptre as the rod of faction:
But Henry's daughter claims a nobler soul.
I'll nurse no party, but will reign o'er all,
And my sole rule shall be to bless my people:
Who serves them best, has still my highest favour:
This Essex ever did.

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

Behold, Southampton,
What a base portrait's here! The faithful Essex
Here drawn at large, associating with rebels,
To spoil his country, and dethrone his queen!

South. It is not like.—By Heav'n, the hand of Envy
Drew these false lines, distorted far from truth
And honour, and unlike my noble friend
As light to shade, or hell to highest heav'n.
Then suffer not, thou best of queens, this lord,
This valiant lord, to fall a sacrifice
To treachery and base designs; who now
Engages death in all his horrid shapes,
Amidst a hardy race, inur'd to danger;
But let him, face to face, this charge encounter,
And every falsehood, like his foes, shall fly.

Qu. Eliz. To me you seem to recommend strict Justice,
In all her pomp of power. But are you sure
No subtle vice conceal'd assumes her garb?
Take heed, that Malice does not wear the mask,
Nor Envy deck her in the borrow'd guise.
Rancour has often darken'd Reason's eye,
And Judgement winks, when Passion holds the scale.
Impeach the very man to whom I owe
My brighest rays of glory! Look to it, lords;
Take care, be cautious on what ground you tread;
Let honest means alone secure your footing.
Raleigh and you withdraw, and wait our leisure.
[*Exeunt* RALEIGH *and* SOUTHAMPTON.
Lord Burleigh, stay; we must with you have farther
Conf'rence.—I see this base contrivance plain.
Your jealousy and pride, your envy of
His shining merit, brought this bill to light.

But mark me, as you prize our high regard
And favour, I command you to suppress it:
Let not our name and power be embarrass'd
In your perplexing schemes. 'Twas you began,
And therefore you must end it.
Bur. I obey.
Yet humbly would entreat you to consider
How new, unpopular, this step must be,
To stand between your parliament's inquiry
And this offending lord.—We have such proofs—
Qu. Eliz. Reserve your proofs to a more proper season,
And let them then appear. But once again
We charge you, on your duty and allegiance,
To stop this vile proceeding; and to wait
Till Essex can defend himself in person.
If then your accusations are of force,
The laws, and my consent, no doubt, are open.
He has my strict command, with menace mix'd,
To end effectually this hated war,
Ere he presume to quit the Irish coast.
Bur. Madam, my duty now compels me to—
Qu. Eliz. No more! see that my orders be obey'd. [*Exit* BUR.
Essex a traitor!—it can never be—
His grateful and his honest soul disdains it.—
Can he prove false? so high advanc'd, so honour'd,
So near my favour—and—I fear, so near
My heart!—Impossible.—This Burleigh hates him,
And, as his rival, therefore would destroy him;
But he shall find his narrow schemes defeated.
In vain their fraudful efforts shall combine
To shake my settled soul, my firm design;
Resolv'd to lift bright Virtue's palm on high,
Support her grandeur, and her foes deny. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Antechamber in the Palace.*

Enter BURLEIGH.

Bur. Essex arriv'd! Confusion to my hopes!
His presence will destroy me with the queen.
I much suspect he had some private notice,
Perhaps a punctual order, to return.
He lurks too near her heart.—What's to be done?
Now is th' important crisis—
Keep up thy usual strength, my better genius;
Direct my steps to crush my mortal foe.

Enter Queen ELIZABETH *and* RALEIGH.

Qu. Eliz. It cannot be! Return'd without my leave!
Against my strict command!—Impossible!
Ral. Madam, the earl is now at court, and begs
An audience of your majesty.
Qu. Eliz. Amazing!
What! break his trust! desert his high command,
Forsake his post, and disobey his queen!
'Tis false—invented all.—You wish it so.
Bur. Madam, I wish some other rumours false:
Reports, I fear, of great concern to you.
Qu. Eliz. What rumours? what reports? your frown would much
Denote: your preface seems important.—Speak.
Bur. Some new commotions are of late sprung up
In Ireland, where the west is all in arms,
And moves with hasty march to join Tyrone,
And all his northern clans. A dreadful power!
Nay, more; we have advices from the borders,
Of sudden risings, near the banks of Tweed!
'Tis thought, to favour an attempt from Scotland.
Meanwhile, Tyrone embarks six thousand men
To land at Milford, and to march where Essex
Shall join them with his friends.
Qu. Eliz. In league with James!
And plotting with Tyrone! It cannot be.
His very pride disdains such perfidy.
But is not Essex here without my leave!
Against my strict command! that, that's rebellion.
The rest, if true, or false, it matters not.
What's to be done?—admit him to my presence?
No, no—my dignity, my pride forbid it.
Ungrateful man, approach me not; rise, rise,
Resentment, and support my soul! Disdain,
Do thou assist me—Yes, it shall be so.
Bur. I see she muses deep;
Tyrone's invasion wakes her fear and anger,
And all her soul is one continued storm.
Qu. Eliz. For once my pride shall stoop; and I will see
This rash, audacious, this once favour'd man;
But treat him as his daring crimes deserve.

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

South. [*Kneeling.*] Permit me, madam, to approach you thus;
Thus lowly to present the humble suit
Of the much injur'd, faithful, earl of Essex,
Who dares not, unpermitted, meet your presence.
He begs, most gracious queen, to fall before
Your royal feet, to clear him to his sovereign,
Whom, next to Heav'n, he wishes most to please,
Let faction load him with her labouring hand,
His innocence shall rise against the weight,
If but his gracious mistress deign to smile.
Qu. Eliz. Let him appear. [*Exit* SOUTH.
Now to thy trying task,
My soul! Put forth, exert thy utmost strength,
Nor let an injur'd queen be tame.—Lie still,
My heart, I cannot listen to thee now.

Enter ESSEX *and* SOUTHAMPTON.

Essex. Forgive, thou injur'd majesty, thou best
Of queens, this seeming disobedience! See,
I bend submissive in your royal presence,
With soul as penitent, as if before
Th' all-searching eye of Heav'n. But, oh, that frown!

My queen's resentment wounds my inmost spirit,
Strikes me like death, and pierces through my heart.
Qu. Eliz. You have obey'd, my lord! you've serv'd me well!
My deadly foes are quell'd! and you come home
A conqueror! your country bids you welcome!
And I, your queen, applaud!—Triumphant man!
What! is it thus that Essex gains his laurels?
What! is it thus you've borne my high commission?
How durst you disregard your trusted duty,
Desert your province, and betray your queen?
Essex. I came to clear my injur'd name from guilt,
Imputed guilt, and slanderous accusations.
My shame was wafted in each passing gale,
Each swelling tide came loaded with my wrongs;
And echo sounded forth, from faction's voice,
The traitor Essex.—Was't not hard, my queen,
That, while I stood in danger's dreadful front,
Encountering death in every shape of terror,
And bleeding for my country—Was't not hard,
My mortal enemies at home, like cowards,
Should in my absence basely blast my fame?
Qu. Eliz. It is the godlike attribute of kings,
To raise the virtuous, and protect the brave.
I was the guardian of your reputation;
What malice, or what faction, then, could reach you?
My honour was expos'd, engag'd for yours:
But you found reason to dislike my care,
And to yourself assum'd the wrested office.
Essex. If aught disloyal in this bosom dwells,
If aught of treason lodges in this heart,
May I to guilt and lasting shame be wedded,
The sport of faction, and the mark of scorn,
The world's derision, and my queen's abhorrence.
Stand forth the villain, whose envenom'd tongue
Would taint my honour, and traduce my name,
Or stamp my conduct with a rebel's brand!
Lives there a monster in the haunts of men,
Dares tear my trophies from their pillar'd base,
Eclipse my glory, and disgrace my deeds?
Qu. Eliz. This ardent language, and this glow of soul,
Were nobly graceful in a better cause;
Where virtue warrants, and where truth inspires:
But injur'd truth, with brow invincible,
Frowns stern reproof upon the false assertion,
And contradicts it with the force of facts.
From me you have appeal'd, ungrateful man!
The laws, not I, must listen to your plea.
Go, stand the test severe, abide the trial,
And mourn, too late, the bounty you abus'd.
[*Exeunt Queen* ELIZABETH, SOUTHAMPTON, *&c.*
Essex. Is this the just requital, then, of all
My patriot toils, and oft encounter'd perils,
Amidst th' inclemencies of camps and climes?
Then be it so—Unmov'd and dauntless, let me
This shock of adverse fortune firmly stand.

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

South. Alas, my lord! the queen's displeasure kindles
With warmth increasing; whilst lord Burleigh labours
T'inflame her wrath, and make it still burn fiercer.
Essex. I scorn the blaze of courts, the pomp of kings;
I give them to the winds and lighter vanity;
Too long they've robb'd me of substantial bliss,
Of solid happiness, and true enjoyments.
But lead me to my mourning love; alas!
She sinks beneath oppressing ills; she fades,
She dies for my afflicting pangs, and seeks
Me, sorrowing, in the walks of woe.—Distraction!
Oh, lead me to her, to my soul's desire.
South. Let caution guide you in this dangerous step.
Consider well, my lord, the consequence—
For should the queen (forbid it, Heaven!) discover
Your private loves, your plighted hands, no power
On earth could step between you and destruction.

Enter BURLEIGH.

Bur. My lord of Essex, 'tis the queen's command,
That you forthwith resign your staff of office;
And further, she confines you to your palace.
Essex. Welcome, my fate! Let fortune do her utmost;
I know the worst, and will confront her malice,
And bravely bear the unexpected blow.
Bur. The queen, my lord, demands your quick compliance.
Essex. Go, then, thou gladsome messenger of ill,
And, joyful, feast thy fierce rapacious soul
With Essex' sudden and accomplish'd fall.
The trampled corse of all his envy'd greatness,
Lies prostrate now beneath thy savage feet;
But still th' exalted spirit moves above thee.
Go, tell the queen thy own detested story:
Full in her sight disclose the snaky labyrinths,
And lurking snares, you plant in virtue's path,
To catch integrity's unguarded step.
Bur. Your country has impeach'd, your queen accus'd you;
To these address your best defence, and clear
Your question'd conduct from disloyal guilt.
What answer to the queen shall I return?
Essex. My staff of office I from her receiv'd,
And will to her, and her alone, resign it.
Bur. This bold refusal will incense the queen.
This arrogance will make your guilt the stronger.
[*Exit.*
South. Sustain, my noble friend, thy wonted greatness;
Collect thy fortitude, and summon all
Thy soul, to bear with strength this crushing weight,
Which falls severe upon thee; whilst my friendship
Shall lend a helping hand, and share the burden.
I'll hence with speed, and to the queen repair,

And all the power of warmest words employ,
To gain you yet one audience more, and bring
Her majesty to milder thoughts. Farewell.
[*Exit.*

Essex. As newly wak'd from all my dreams of glory,
Those gilded visions of deceitful joys,
I stand confounded at the unlook'd-for change,
And scarcely feel this thunderbolt of fate.
The painted clouds, which bore my hopes aloft,
Alas, are now vanish'd to yielding air,
And I am fall'n indeed!—
How weak is reason, when affection pleads!
How hard to turn the fond, deluded heart
From flatt'ring toys, which sooth'd its vanity!
The laurell'd trophy, and the loud applause,
The victor's triumph, and the people's gaze;
The high-hung banner, and recording gold,
Subdue me still, still cling around my heart,
And pull my reason down.

Enter Lady RUTLAND.

Rut. Oh, let me fly,
To clasp, embrace, the lord of my desires,
My soul's delight, my utmost joy, my husband!
Once more I hold him in my eager arms,
Behold his face, and lose my soul in rapture!

Essex. Transporting bliss! my richest, dearest treasure!
My mourning turtle, my long absent peace,
Oh, come yet nearer, nearer to my heart!
My raptur'd soul springs forward, to receive thee,
Thou heav'n on earth, thou balm of all my woe!

Rut. Oh, shall I credit, then, each ravish'd sense?
Has pitying Heav'n consented to my prayer?
It has, it has; my Essex is return'd!
But language poorly speaks the joys I feel;
Let passion paint, and looks express my soul.

Essex. With thee, my sweetest comfort, I'll retire
From splendid palaces, and glitt'ring throngs,
To live embosom'd in the shades of joy,
Where sweet content extends her friendly arms,
And gives increasing love a lasting welcome.
With thee, I'll timely fly from proud oppression,
Forget our sorrows, and be bless'd for ever.

Rut. Oh! let us hence, beyond the reach of power,
Where fortune's hand shall never part us more!
In this calm state of innocence and joy,
I'll press thee to my throbbing bosom close.
Ambition's voice shall call in vain; the world,
The thankless world, shall never claim thee more,
And all thy business shall be love and me.

Essex. The queen, incens'd at my return, abandons me
To Cecil's malice, and the rage of faction.
I'm now no more the fav'rite child of fortune:
My enemies have caught me in the toil,
And life has nothing worth my wish but thee.

Rut. Delusive dream of fancied happiness!
And has my fatal fondness then destroy'd thee?
Oh, have I lur'd thee to the deadly snare
Thy cruel foes have laid?
I dreaded Cecil's malice, and my heart,
Longing to see thee, with impatience listen'd
To its own alarms; and prudence sunk beneath
The force of love.

Essex. Forbear, my only comfort;
Oh, tell me not of danger, death, and Burleigh;
Let every star shed down its mortal bane
On my unshelter'd head: whilst thus I fold
Thee in my raptur'd arms, I'll brave them all,
Defy my fate, and meet its utmost rigour.

Rut. Alas, my lord! consider where we are.
Oh, 'tis the queen's apartment;
Each precious moment is by fate beset,
And time stands trembling whilst we thus confer.

Essex. Then, let us hence from this detested place;
My rescu'd soul disdains the house of greatness
Where humble honesty can find no shelter.
From hence we'll fly, where love and greatness call;
Where happiness invites—that wish of all:
With sweet content enjoy each blissful hour,
Beyond the smiles of fraud, or frowns of power.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Palace.*

Enter BURLEIGH *and Lady* NOTTINGHAM.

Not. My lord, I've sought you out with much impatience.
You've had an audience of the queen: what follow'd?

Bur. Soon as I told her, Essex had refus'd
To yield his dignities, and staff of office,
Against her high command, pronounc'd by me,
She seem'd depriv'd of reason for a moment;
Her working mind betray'd contending passions;
She paus'd, like thunder in some kindling cloud,
The instant burst with dreadful fury forth:
"And has th' ungrateful wretch defy'd my mandate?
The proud, audacious traitor, scorn'd my power?
He dares not sure?—He dies,—the villain dies!"
I instantly withdrew,
But soon was countermanded, and desir'd
To bring the earl of Essex to her presence.
I like it not; and much I fear, she'll stand
Between this high offender and the laws.

Not. Is Essex then secur'd?
Bur. Madam, he is;
And now comes guarded to the court.

Enter Gentleman.

Gent. Madam, the queen
Is in her closet, and desires to see you. [*Exit.*
Not. I attend her.
Bur. She wants, no doubt, to be advis'd by you.
Improve this fair occasion, urge it home.
Not. I know her foible. Essex long has had
An interest in her heart, which nothing can
O'erturn, except his own ungovern'd spirit:
It is, indeed, the instrument by which
We work, and cannot fail, if rightly us'd.
Bur. Madam, the queen expects you instantly.
I must withdraw, and wait the earl's arrival.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*The Queen's Closet.*

Queen ELIZABETH *discovered.*

Qu. Eliz. Ill-fated, wretched man! perverse and obstinate!
He counterworks my grace, and courts destruction.
He gives his deadly foes the dagger to
Destroy him, and defeats my friendly purpose,
Which would, by seeming to abandon, save him.
Nor will he keep the mask of prudence on
A moment's space.—What! must I bear this scorn?
No: let me all the monarch re-assume;
Exert my power, and be myself again.—
Oh, ill-performing, disobedient, heart!—
Why shrink'st thou, fearful, from thy own resolve?

Enter Lady NOTTINGHAM.

Thou com'st in time; I'm much disturb'd, abus'd,
My Nottingham, and would complain to thee
Of insolence, neglect, and high contempt.
Essex presum'd to dictate laws within
My palace gates. How say'st thou, Nottingham?
Not. Surely, my gracious queen, it cannot be!
His heat and passion never could impel him
To take so bold a step, to such rash guilt:
Methinks his very honour should prevent it.
Qu. Eliz. This haughty man has wanton'd with my grace,
Abus'd my bounty, and despis'd my favours.
Not. His conduct has, I fear, been too unguarded:
His hasty temper knows not where to stop.
Ambition is the spur of all his actions,
Which often drives him o'er his duty's limits;
(At least his enemies would have it so.)
But malice, madam, seldom judges right.
Qu. Eliz. Oh, Nottingham! his pride is past enduring;
This insolent, audacious man, forgets
His honour and allegiance;—and refus'd
To render up his staff of office, here,
Beneath my very eye.
Not. Presumptuous man!
Your faithful subjects will resent this pride,
This insolence, this treason to their queen;
They must, my gracious sovereign.—'Tis not safe
To shield him longer from their just resentment.
Then give him up to justice and the laws.
Qu. Eliz. You seem well pleas'd to urge severity.—
Offended majesty but seldom wants
Such sharp advisers—Yet no attribute
So well befits the exalted seat supreme,
And Power's disposing hand, as clemency.
Each crime must from its quality be judg'd;
And pity there should interpose, where malice
Is not the aggressor.
Not. Madam, my sentiments were well intended;
Justice, not malice, mov'd my honest zeal.
My words were echoes of the public voice,
Which daily rises, with repeated cries
Of high complaint against this haughty lord.
I pity, from my heart, his rash attempts,
And much esteem the man.
Qu. Eliz. Go, Nottingham,
My mind's disturb'd, and send me Rutland hither.
[*Exit Lady* NOTTINGHAM.
O vain distinction of exalted state!
No rank ascends above the reach of care,
Nor dignity can shield a queen from woe.
Despotic nature's stronger sceptre rules,
And pain and passion in her right prevails.
Oh the unpity'd lot, severe condition,
Of solitary, sad, dejected, grandeur!
Alone condemn'd to bear th' unsocial throb
Of heartfelt anguish, and corroding grief;
Depriv'd of what, within his homely shed,
The poorest peasant in affliction finds,
The kind, condoling, comfort of a dear
Partaking friend.—

Enter Lady RUTLAND.

Rutland, I want thy timely
Counsel. I'm importun'd, and urg'd to punish—
But justice, sometimes, has a cruel sound.
Essex has,
No doubt, provok'd my anger, and the laws;
His haughty conduct calls for sharp reproof,
And just correction. Yet I think him guiltless
Of studied treasons, or design'd rebellion.
Then, tell me, Rutland, what the world reports,
What censure says of his unruly deeds.
Rut. The world, with envy's eye, beholds his merit:
Madam, 'tis malice all, and false report.
I know his noble heart, 'tis fill'd with honour:
No trait'rous taint has touch'd his generous soul;
His grateful mind still glows with pure affection;
And all his thoughts are loyalty and you.
Qu. Eliz. I grant you, Rutland, all you say, and think
The earl possess'd of many splendid virtues.
What pity 'tis, he should afford his foes
Such frequent, sad, occasions to undo him!

Rut. What human heart can, unafflicted, bear
Such manly merit in distress, beset
By cruel foes, and faction's savage cry?
My good, my gracious mistress, stretch, betimes,
Your saving arm, and snatch him from destruction,
From deadly malice, treachery, and Cecil.
Oh, let him live, to clear his conduct up!
My gracious queen, he'll nobly earn your bounty;
And with his dearest blood deserve your mercy.

Qu. Eliz. Her words betray a warm, unusual, fervour;
Mere friendship never could inspire this transport. [*Aside.*
I never doubted but the earl was brave;
His life and valiant actions all declare it:
I think him honest too, but rash and headstrong.
I gladly would preserve him from his foes,
And therefore am resolv'd once more to see him.

Rut. Oh, 'tis a godlike thought, and Heav'n itself
Inspires it. Sure some angel moves your heart,
Your royal heart, to pity and forgiveness.
This gracious deed shall shine in future story,
And deck your annals with the brightest virtue;
Posterity shall praise the princely act,
And ages yet to come record your goodness.

Qu. Eliz. I'll hear no more—Must I then learn from you
To know my province, and be taught to move,
As each designing mind directs?—Leave me.

Rut. Her frowns are dreadful, and her eye looks terror.
I tremble for my Essex. Save him, Heav'n! [*Exit.*

Qu. Eliz. Her warmth has touch'd me home. My jealous heart,
My fearful and suspicious soul's alarm'd.

Enter BURLEIGH, RALEIGH, *and Gentlemen.*

Bur. The earl of Essex waits your royal will.

Qu. Eliz. Let him approach—And now once more support
Thy dignity, my soul; nor yield thy greatness
To strong usurping passion—But he comes.

Enter ESSEX *and* SOUTHAMPTON.

Essex. Permitted thus to bend, with prostrate heart, [*Kneels.*
Before your sacred majesty, I come,
With every grateful sense of royal favour
Deeply engrav'd within my conscious soul.

Qu. Eliz. I sent my orders for your staff of office.

Essex. Madam, my envy'd dignities and honours,
I first from your own royal hand receiv'd;
And therefore justly held it far beneath me
To yield my trophies, and exalted power,
So dearly purchas'd in the field of glory,
To hands unworthy. No, my gracious queen,
I meant to lay them at your royal feet;
Where life itself a willing victim falls,
If you command.

Qu. Eliz. High swelling words, my lord, but ill supply
The place of deeds, and duty's just demand.
In danger's onset, and the day of trial,
Conviction still on acting worth attends;
Whilst mere professions are by doubts encumber'd.

Essex. My deeds have oft declar'd in danger's front
How far my duty and my valour lead me.
Allegiance still my thirst of glory fir'd,
And all my bravely gather'd, envy'd, laurels
Were purchas'd only to adorn my queen.

Qu. Eliz. Your guilty scorn of my intrusted power,
When with my mortal foes you tamely dally'd,
By hardy rebels brav'd, you poorly sought
A servile pause, and begg'd a shameful truce.
Should Essex thus so meanly compromise,
And lose the harvest of a plenteous glory,
In idle treaties, and suspicious parley!

Essex. O, deadly stroke! My life's the destin'd mark.
The poison'd shaft has drank my spirits deep.
Is't come to this? Conspire with rebels! Ha!
I've serv'd you, madam, with the utmost peril,
And ever glory'd in th' illustrious danger;
Where famine fac'd me with her meagre mien,
And pestilence and death brought up her train.
I've fought your battles, in despite of nature,
Where seasons sicken'd, and the clime was fate.
My power to parley, or to fight, I had
From you; the time and circumstance did call,
Aloud for mutual treaty and condition;
For that I stand a guarded felon here.—A traitor,
Hemm'd in by villains, and by slaves surrounded.

Qu. Eliz. Shall added insolence, with crest audacious,
Her front uplift against the face of power?
Think not that injur'd majesty will bear
Such arrogance uncheck'd, or unchastis'd.
No public trust becomes the man, who treads
With scornful steps in honour's sacred path,
And stands at bold defiance with his duty.

Essex. Away with dignities and hated trust,
With flattering honours, and deceitful power!
Invert th' eternal rules of right and justice;
Let villains thrive, and outcast virtue perish;
Let slaves be rais'd, and cowards have command.
Take, take your gaudy trifles back, those baits
Of vice, and virtue's bane.—'Tis clear, my queen,
My royal mistress, casts me off; nay, joins
With Cecil to destroy my life and fame.

Qu. Eliz. Presuming wretch! Audacious traitor!

Essex. Traitor!

Qu. Eliz. Hence from my sight, ungrateful slave, and learn
At distance to revere your queen.

Essex. Yes; let
Me fly beyond the limits of the world,
And nature's verge, from proud oppression far,
From malice, tyranny, from courts, from you,

Qu. Eliz. Traitor! villain! [*Strikes him.*
Essex. Confusion! what, a blow!
Restrain, good Heaven! down, down, thou rebel passion,
And, judgment, take the reins. Madam, 'tis well—
Your soldier falls degraded;
His glory's tarnish'd, and his fame undone.
O, bounteous recompence from royal hands!
But you, ye implements, beware, beware,
What honour wrong'd, and honest wrath can act.
Qu. Eliz. What would th' imperious traitor do? My life
Beyond thy wretched purpose stands secure.
Go, learn at leisure what your deeds deserve,
And tremble at the vengeance you provoke.
[*Exeunt all but* ESSEX *and* SOUTHAMPTON.
Essex. Disgrac'd, and struck! Damnation! Death were glorious!
Revenge! Revenge!
South. Alas, my friend! what would
Thy rage attempt? Consider well the great
Advantage now your rash, ungovern'd temper
Affords your foes. The queen, incens'd, will let
Their fury loose.—I dread the dire event!
Essex. Has honest pride no just resentment left?
Nor injur'd honour, feeling?—Not revenge!
High Heaven shall hear, and earth regret my wrongs.
Hot indignation burns within my soul.
I'll do some dreadful thing!—I know not what;
Some deeds as horrid as the shame I feel,
Shall startle nature, and alarm the world.
Then hence, like lightning, let me furious fly,
To hurl destruction at my foes on high;
Pull down oppression from its tyrant seat,
Redeem my glory, or embrace my fate. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Palace.*

Enter Queen ELIZABETH *and* NOTTINGHAM.

Qu. Eliz. Not taken yet?
Not. No, madam: for the earl
Of Essex, leagu'd with desperate friends, made strong
And obstinate resistance; till, at length,
O'erpower'd by numbers, and increasing force,
He fled for shelter to a small retreat,
A summer house, upon the Thames; resolv'd
To perish, rather than submit to power.
Qu. Eliz. Oh, where shall majesty bestow its favours,
Since Essex has a traitor prov'd to me,
Whose arm hath rais'd him up to power and greatness;
Whose heart has shar'd in all his splendid triumphs,
And feels, ev'n now, his trait'rous deeds with pity?
But hence with pity, and the woman's pangs:
Resentment governs, and the queen shall punish.

Enter BURLEIGH.

Bur. Illustrious queen! the traitors all are seiz'd.
Their black debates
Were held at Drury-House. The dire result
Was this: that Essex should alarm the citizens
To open mutiny, and bold rebellion.
Their purpose was to seize your royal palace,
And sacred person; but your faithful people,
As by one mind inform'd, one zeal inspir'd,
Rose up at once, and with their virtue quell'd them.
Qu. Eliz. Thanks to their honest, to their loyal hearts!
But say, were any persons else concern'd,
Of high distinction, or of noted rank?
Bur. Yes, madam, many more;
'Mong whom, the bold Southampton foremost stands.
They're now our pris'ners, and are safe secur'd;
But Essex, with Southampton, and the rest
Of greater note, I would not dare dispose of
Without your royal mandate; and they now
Attend without, to know your final pleasure.
Qu. Eliz. Is this the just return of all my care?
My anxious toilsome days, and watchful nights?
Have I sent forth a wish, that went not freighted
With all my people's good? Or, have I life,
Or length of days desir'd, but for their sake?
The public good is all my private care!
Then could I think this grateful isle
Contain'd one traitor's heart? But, least of all,
That Essex' breast should lodge it? Call the monster,
And let me meet this rebel face to face.
Do you withdraw, and wait within our call.
[*Exeunt* BURLEIGH *and* NOTTINGHAM.

Enter ESSEX.

You see, we dare abide your dangerous presence.
Though treason sits within your heart enthron'd,
And on that brow rebellion lours, where once
Such boasted loyalty was said to flourish.
How low the traitor can degrade the soldier!
Guilt glares in conscious dye upon thy cheek,
And inward horror trembles in thine eye.
How mean is fraud!—How base ingratitude!
Essex. Forbear reproach, thou injur'd majesty,
Nor wound, with piercing looks, a heart already
With anguish torn, and bleeding with remorse.
Your awful looks, alone, are arm'd with death,
And justice gives them terror.
Qu. Eliz. Hapless man!
What cause could prompt, what fiend could urge thee on
To this detested deed? Could I from thee

Expect to meet this base return? from thee,
To whom I ought to fly with all the confidence
That giving bounty ever could inspire,
Or seeming gratitude and worth could promise?
Essex. Alas! I own my crimes, and feel my treasons;
They press me down beneath the reach of pity.
Despair alone can shield me from myself.
Qu. Eliz. My pride forbids me to reproach thee more;
My pity, rather, would relieve thy sorrow.
The people's clamours, and my special safety,
Call loud for justice, and demand your life.
But if forgiveness from an injur'd queen
Can make the few short hours you live more easy,
I give it freely, from my pitying heart;
And wish my willing power could grant thee more.
Essex. Oh, let me prostrate thus before you fall,
My better angel, and my guardian genius!
Permit me, royal mistress, to announce
My faithful sentiments, my soul's true dictates;
Vouchsafe your Essex but this one request,
This only boon—he'll thank you with his last,
His dying breath, and bless you in his passage.
Qu. Eliz. Rise, my lord!
If aught you have to offer, can allay
Your woes, and reconcile you to your fate,
Proceed;—and I with patient ear will listen.
Essex. My real errors, and my seeming crimes,
Would weary mercy, and make goodness poor:
And yet the source of all my greatest faults
Was loyalty misled, and duty in extreme.
So jealous was my sanguine heart, so warm
Affection's zeal, I could not bear the least
Suspicion of my duty to my queen.
This drove me from my high command in Ireland;
This, too, impell'd me to that rude behaviour,
Which justly urg'd the shameful blow I felt;
And this, O fatal rashness! made me think
My queen had given her Essex up, a victim
To statesmen's schemes, and wicked policy.
Stung by that piercing thought, my madness flew
Beyond all bounds, and now, alas! has brought me
To this most shameful fall; and, what's still worse,
My own reproaches, and my queen's displeasure.
Qu. Eliz. Unhappy man! My yielding soul is touch'd,
And pity pleads thy cause within my breast.
Essex. Say, but, my gracious sovereign, ere I go
For ever from your presence, that you think me
Guiltless of all attempts against your throne,
And sacred life. Your faithful Essex ne'er
Could harbour in his breast so foul a thought.
Believe it not, my queen. By Heav'n I swear,
When in my highest pitch of glory rais'd,—
The splendid noon of Fortune's brightest sunshine,—
Not ages of renown could yield me half
The joy, nor make my life so greatly blest,
As saving yours, though for a single hour.
Qu. Eliz. My lord, I would convince you, that I still
Regard your life, and labour to preserve it;
But cannot screen you from a public trial.
With prudence make your best defence: but should
Severity her iron jurisdiction
Extend too far, and give thee up condemn'd
To angry laws, thy queen will not forget thee.
Yet, lest you then should want a faithful friend,
(For friends will fly you in the time of need)
Here, from my finger, take this ring, a pledge
Of mercy; having this, you ne'er shall need
An advocate with me; for whensoe'er
You give, or send it back, by Heav'n I swear,
As I do hope for mercy on my soul,
That I will grant whatever boon you ask.
Essex. Oh, grace surprising! most amazing goodness!
Words cannot paint the transports of my soul!
Let me receive it on my grateful knees,
At once to thank, and bless the hand that gives it.
Qu. Eliz. Depend, my lord, on this—'twixt you and me,
This ring shall be a private mark of faith
[*Gives the Ring.*
Inviolate. Be confident; cheer up;
Dispel each melancholy fear, and trust
Your sovereign's promise—she will ne'er forsake you.
Essex. Let Providence dispose my lot as 'twill,
May watchful angels ever guard my queen;
May healing wisdom in her councils reign,
And firm fidelity surround her throne;
May victory her dreaded banners bear,
And joyful conquests crown her soldiers' brow;
Let every bliss be mingled in her cup,
And Heaven, at last, become her great reward.
[*Exit.*
Qu. Eliz. 'Tis done:
And yet foreboding tremors shake my heart.
Something sits heavy here, and presses down
My spirits with its weight. What can it mean?
Suppose he is condemn'd! my royal word
Is plighted for his life; his enemies,
No doubt, will censure much.—No matter, let them;
I know him honest, and despise their malice.

Enter Countess of RUTLAND.

Rut. Where is the queen? I'll fall before her feet
Prostrate; implore, besiege her royal heart,
And force her to forgive.
Qu. Eliz. What means this phrensy?
Rut. Oh, gracious queen! if ever pity touch'd
Your generous breast, let not the cruel axe
Destroy his precious life; preserve my Essex,
My life, my hope, my joy, my all, my husband!
Qu. Eliz. Husband!—What sudden, deadly blow is this!
Hold up, my soul, nor sink beneath this woumd.
You beg a traitor's life!

Rut. Oh, gracious queen!
He ever lov'd—was ever faithful—brave!
If nature dwells about your heart, oh, spurn
Me not!—My lord! my love! my husband bleeds!
Qu. Eliz. Take her away.
Rut. I cannot let you go.
Hold off your hands!—Here on this spot I'll fix—
Here lose all sense. Still let me stretch these arms,
Inexorable queen!—He yet may live.
Oh, give him to my poor, afflicted heart!
One pitying look, to save me from distraction.
Qu. Eliz. I'll hear no more. I'm tortur'd—take her hence.
Rut. Nay, force me not away.—Inhuman wretches!
Oh, mercy, mercy!—Then, to thee, good Heaven,
(My queen, my cruel queen, denies to hear me!)
To thee, for mercy bend.
Melt down her bosom's frozen sense, to feel
Some portion of my deadly grief, my fell
Distraction.—Turn, oh, turn, and see a wife,
A tortur'd wife——
Qu. Eliz. Why am I not obeyed?
Rut. Nay, do not thus
Abandon me to fell despair. Just Heaven,
That sees my sorrows, will avenge the wrong,
This cruel wrong—this barbarous tyranny.
[*Forced off.*
Qu. Eliz. Wedded to Rutland! Most unhappy pair!
And, oh, ill-fated queen! Never till now
Did sorrow settle in my heart its throne.
Recall my pledge of safety from his hands,
And give him up to death!—But life or death
To me is equal now.
Unhappy state, where peace shall never come!
One fatal moment has confirm'd my doom—
Turn'd all my comfort to intestine strife,
And fill'd with mortal pangs my future life!
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Tower.*

Enter RALEIGH *and Lieutenant of the Tower.*

Ral. Their peers, with much indulgence, heard their plea,
And gave them ample scope for their defence;
But naught avail'd—their crimes were too notorious.
They bore their sentence with becoming spirit:
And here's the royal mandate for their deaths.
The lady Nottingham!—What brings her hither?

Enter Lady NOTTINGHAM.

Not. Lieutenant, lead me to the earl of Essex,
I bring a message to him from the queen.
Lieut. He's with his friend, the brave Southampton, madam,
Preparing now for his expected fate.—
But I'll acquaint his lordship with your pleasure.
[*Exit.*
Ral. What means this message? Does the queen relent?
Not. I fear she does;
Go you to court, for Cecil there expects you.
I've promis'd to acquaint him with what passes
'Twixt me and Essex, ere I see the queen.
Ral. Madam, I go. [*Exit.*
Not. Now, vengeance, steel my heart!
Offended woman, whilst her pride remains,
To malice only, and revenge, will bow;
And every virtue at that altar sacrifice.
But see, he comes, with manly sorrow clad.
There was a time, that presence could subdue
My pride, and melt my heart to gentle pity.
I then could find no joy but in his smiles;
And thought him lovely as the summer's bloom;
But all his beauties are now hateful grown.

Enter ESSEX.

Essex. Whether you bring me death, or life, I know not.
But, if strict friendship, and remembrance past,
May aught presage to my afflicted heart,
Sure mercy only from those lips should flow,
And grace be utter'd from that friendly tongue.
Not. My lord, I'm glad you think me still your friend.
I come not to upbraid, but serve you now;
And pleas'd I am to be the messenger
Of such glad tidings, in the day of trouble,
As I now bring you. When the queen had heard,
That by the lords you were condemn'd to die,
She sent me, in her mercy, here, to know
If you had aught to offer, that might move
Her royal clemency to spare your life.
Essex. Could any circumstance new lustre add
To my dread sovereign's goodness, 'tis the making
The kind, the generous Nottingham, its messenge
Not. 'Tis well, my lord; but there's no time to spare—
The queen impatient waits for my return.
Essex. My heart was wishing for some faithful friend,
And bounteous Heaven hath sent thee to my hopes.
Know then, kind Nottingham, for now I'll trust
Thee with the dearest secret of my life,
'Tis not long since, the queen (who well foresaw
To what the malice of my foes would drive me)
Gave me this ring, this sacred pledge of mercy;
And with it made a solemn vow to Heaven,
That, whensoever I should give, or send

It back again, she'd freely grant whate'er
Request I then should make.
Not. Give, give it me,
My lord! and let me fly, on friendship's wings,
To bear it to the queen, and to it add
My prayers and influence to preserve thy life.
Essex. Oh! take it then—it is the pledge of life!
Oh! it is my dear Southampton's
Last, last remaining stay! his thread of being,
Which, more than worlds, I prize!—Oh, take it then;
Take it, thou guardian angel of my life,
And offer up the incense of my prayer!
Oh beg, entreat, implore her majesty,
From public shame, and ignominious death,
And from the obdurate axe, to save my friend.
Not. My lord, with all the powers that nature gave,
And friendship can inspire, I'll urge the queen
To grant you your request.
Essex. Kind Nottingham!
Your pious offices shall ever be
My fervent theme; and if my doubtful span
Relenting Heaven should stretch to years remote,
Each passing hour shall still remind my thoughts,
And tell me, that I owe my all to thee:
My friend shall thank you too for lengthen'd life.
And now I fly with comfort to his arms,
To let him know the mercy that you bring.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Court.*

Enter Queen ELIZABETH *and* BURLEIGH.

Qu. Eliz. Ha! is not Nottingham returned?
Bur. No, madam.
Qu. Eliz. Dispatch a speedy messenger to haste her.—
My agitated heart can find no rest.
So near the brink of fate—unhappy man!

Enter Lady NOTTINGHAM.

How now, my Nottingham—what news from Essex?
What says the earl?
Not. I wish, with all my soul,
Th' ungrateful task had been another's lot.
I dread to tell it—lost, ill-fated man!
Qu. Eliz. What means this mystery, this strange behaviour?
Pronounce—declare at once; what said the earl?
Not. Alas, my queen! I fear to say; his mind
Is in the strangest mood, that ever pride
On blackest thoughts begot.——He scarce would speak:
And when he did, it was with sullenness,
With hasty tone, and downcast look.
Qu. Eliz. Amazing!
Not feel the terrors of approaching death!
Nor yet the joyful dawn of promis'd life!
Not. He rather seem'd insensible to both,
And with a cold indifference heard your offer;
Till warming up by slow degrees, resentment
Began to swell his restless, haughty mind;
And proud disdain provok'd him to exclaim
Aloud, against the partial power of fortune,
And faction's rage. I begg'd him to consider
His sad condition; nor repulse, with scorn,
The only hand that could preserve him.
Qu. Eliz. Ha!
What!—Said he nothing of a private import?
No circumstance—no pledge—no ring?
Not. None, madam!
But, with contemptuous front, disclaim'd at once
Your proffer'd grace; and scorn'd, he said, a life
Upon such terms bestow'd.
Qu. Eliz. Impossible!
Could Essex treat me thus?—You basely wrong him,
And wrest his meaning from the purpos'd point.
Recall betimes the horrid words you've utter'd:
Confess, and own the whole you've said, was false.
Not. Madam, by truth, and duty, both compell'd,
Against the pleadings of my pitying soul,
I must declare, (Heaven knows with what reluctance)
That never pride insulted mercy more.
He ran o'er all the dangers he had past;
His mighty deeds; his service to the state:
Accus'd your majesty of partial leaning
To favourite lords, to whom he falls a sacrifice;
Appeals to justice, and to future times,
How much he feels from proud oppression's arm:
Nay, something too he darkly hinted at,
Of jealous disappointment, and revenge.
Qu. Eliz. Eternal silence seal thy venom'd lips!
What hast thou utter'd, wretch, to rouse at once
A whirlwind in my soul, which roots up pity,
And destroys my peace?
Let him this instant to the block be led.
[*Exit* NOT.
Upbraid me with my fatal fondness for him!
Ungrateful, barbarous ruffian! O, Elizabeth!
Remember now thy long-establish'd fame,
Thy envy'd glory, and thy father's spirit.
Accuse me of injustice too, and cruelty!
Yes, I'll this instant to the Tower, forget
My regal state, and to his face confront him:
Confound th' audacious villain with my presence,
And add new terrors to the uplifted axe. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Tower.*

Enter ESSEX *and* SOUTHAMPTON.

Esser. Oh, name it not! my friend shall live—he shall!
I know her royal mercy, and her goodness,
Will give you back to life, to length of days,
And me to honour, loyalty, and truth.
Death is still distant far.
South. In life's first spring,
Our green affections grew apace and prosper'd;
The genial summer swell'd our joyful hearts,
To meet and mix each growing fruitful wish.
We're now embark'd upon that stormy flood,
Where all the wise and brave are gone before us,
E'er since the birth of time, to meet eternity.

And what is death, did we consider right?
Shall we, who sought him in the paths of terror,
And fac'd him in the dreadful walks of war,
Shall we astonish'd shrink, like frighted infants,
And start at scaffolds, and their gloomy trappings?

Essex. Yet, still I trust long years remain of friendship.
Let smiling hope drive doubt and fear away,
And death be banished far; where creeping age,
Disease and care, invite him to their dwelling.
I feel assurance rise within my breast,
That all will yet be well.

South. Count not on hope—
We never can take leave, my friend, of life,
On nobler terms. Life! what is life? A shadow!
Its date is but the immediate breath we draw;
Nor have we surety for a second gale;
Ten thousand accidents in ambush lie
For the embodied dream.
A frail and fickle tenement it is,
Which, like the brittle glass, that measures time,
Is often broke, ere half its sands are run.

Essex. Such cold philosophy the heart disdains,
And friendship shudders at the moral tale.
My friend, the fearful precipice is past,
And danger dare not meet us more. Fly swift,
Ye better angels, waft the welcome tidings
Of pardon to my friend—of life and joy!

Enter Lieutenant.

Lieut. I grieve to be the messenger of woe,
But must, my lords, entreat you to prepare
For instant death. Here is the royal mandate,
That orders your immediate execution.

Essex. Immediate execution! what, so sudden?—
No message from the queen, or Nottingham?

Lieut. None, sir.

Essex. Deluded hopes! Oh, worse than death!
Perfidious queen! to make a mock of life!
My friend—my friend destroyed! Why could not mine—
My life atone for both—my blood appease?
Can you, my friend, forgive me?

South. Yes, oh yes,
My bosom's better half, I can.—With thee,
I'll gladly seek the coast unknown, and leave
The lessening mark of irksome life behind.
With thee, my friend, 'tis joy to die!—'tis glory!
For who would wait the tardy stroke of time?
Or cling, like reptiles, to the verge of being,
When we can bravely leap from life at once,
And spring, triumphant, in a friend's embrace?

Enter RALEIGH.

Ral. To you, my lord Southampton, from the queen,
A pardon comes: your life, her mercy spares.

Essex. For ever blest be that indulgent power
Which saves my friend! This weight ta'en off, my soul
Shall upward spring, and mingle with the blessed.

South. All-ruling Heavens! can this—can this be just?
Support me! hold, ye straining heart-strings, hold,
And keep my sinking frame from dissolution!
Oh, 'tis too much for mortal strength to bear,
Or thought to suffer!—No, I'll die with thee!
They shall not part us, Essex!

Essex. Live, oh, live!
Thou noblest, bravest, best of men and friends!
Whilst life is worth thy wish—till time and thou
Agree to part, and nature send thee to me!
Thou generous soul, farewell!——Live, and be happy!
And, oh! may life make largely up to thee
Whatever blessing fate has thus cut off,
From thy departing friend!

Lieut. My lord, my warrant
Strictly forbids to grant a moment's time.

South. Oh, must we part for ever? Cruel fortune!
Wilt thou then tear him hence?—Severe divorce!
Let me cling round thy sacred person still,—
Still clasp thee to my bosom close, and keep
Stern fate at distance.

Essex. Oh, my friend! we'll meet
Again, where virtue finds a just reward!—
Where factious malice never more can reach us!
I need not bid thee guard my fame from wrongs:
And, oh! a dearer treasure to thy care
I trust, than either life or fame—my wife!
Oh, she will want a friend!
Then take her to thy care—do thou pour balm
On her deep-wounded spirit, and let her find
My tender helps in thee!—I must be gone,
My ever faithful and my gallant friend!
I pr'ythee, leave this woman's work.—Farewell!
Take this last, dear embrace—Farewell for ever!

South. My bursting breast! I fain would speak, but words
Are poor—Farewell!—
But we shall meet again—embrace in one
Eternal band, which never shall be loosed.

[*Exit.*

Essex. To death's concluding stroke, lead on, lieutenant.
My wife!—Now reason, fortitude, support me!
For now, indeed, comes on my sorest trial.

Enter Countess of RUTLAND.

Oh, thou last, dear reserve of fortune's malice!
For fate can add no more—
Oh, com'st thou now to arrest my parting soul,
And force it back to life?

Rut. Thou sole delight—
Thou only joy which life could ever give,
Or death deprive me of—my wedded lord!
I come, with thee, determined to endure
The utmost rigour of our angry stars!—
To join thee, fearless, in the grasp of death,
And seek some dwelling in a world beyond it!

Essex. Too much, thou partner of this dismal hour,
Thy generous soul would prompt thee to endure!

Nor can thy tender, trembling heart sustain it.
Long years of bliss remain in store for thee;
And smiling time his treasures shall unfold
To bribe thy stay!
Rut. Thou cruel comforter!
Alas! what's life—what's hated life to me?
Alas, this universe, this goodly frame,
Shall all as one continued curse appear,
And every object blast, when thou art gone.
Essex. Oh, strain not thus the little strength I've left,
The weak support that holds up life! to bear
A few short moments more, its weight of woe,
Its loss of thee! Oh, turn away those eyes!
Nor with that look melt down my fixed resolve!
And yet, a little longer let me gaze
On that loved form! Alas! I feel my sight
Grows dim, and reason from her throne retires:
For pity's sake, let go my breaking heart,
And leave me to my fate!
Rut. Why wilt thou still
Of parting talk?
Oh, that the friendly hand of Heaven would snatch
Us both at once, above the distant stars,
Where fortune's venomed shafts can never pierce,
Nor cruel queens destroy!
Essex. The awful Searcher, whose impartial eye
Explores the secrets of each human heart,
And every thought surveys, can witness for me,
How close thy image clings around my soul!
Retards each rising wish, and draws me back
To life, entangled by that loved idea.
Lieut. My lord,
It now grows late.
Essex. Lead on.
Rut. Stay, stay, my love! my dearest, dying lord!
Ah! whither wouldst thou go? Ah, do not leave me! [*Faints.*
Essex. Thou sinking excellence! thou matchless woman!
Shall fortune rob me of thy dear embrace,
Or earth's whole power, or death divide us now?
Stay, stay, thou spotless injured saint!
Lieut. My lord, already you have been indulged
Beyond what I can warrant by my orders.
Essex. One moment more
Afford me to my sorrows—Oh, look there!
Could bitter anguish pierce your heart, like mine,
You'd pity now the mortal pangs I feel,
The throbs that tear my vital strings away,
And rend my agonizing soul!
Lieut. My lord——
Essex. But one short moment, and I will attend.
Ye sacred ministers, that virtue guard,
And shield the righteous in the paths of peril,
Restore her back to life, and lengthened years
Of joy! dry up her bleeding sorrows all!
Oh, cancel from her thoughts this dismal hour,
And blot my image from her sad remembrance!
'Tis done.—
And now, ye trembling cords of life, give way!
Nature and time, let go your hold!—eternity
Demands me. [*Exeunt* ESSEX *and Lieut.*
Rut. Where has my lost, benighted soul, been wandering?—
What means this mist, that hangs about my mind,
Through which reflection's painful eye discerns
Imperfect forms, and horrid shapes of woe?—
The cloud dispels, the shades withdraw, and all
My dreadful fate appears.—Oh! where's my lord?—
My life! my Essex! Oh! whither have they ta'en him?

Enter Queen ELIZABETH *and Attendants.*

Qu. Eliz. To execution!—Fly with lightning's wing,
And save him!
Be calm, he shall not die! Rise up—I came
To save his life.
Rut. 'Tis mercy's voice that speaks!—
My Essex shall again be mine! My queen,
My bounteous, gracious queen! has said the word.
May troops of angels guard thy sacred life!
And, in thy latest moments, waft thy soul
To meet that mercy in the realms of joy,
Which, now, thy royal goodness grants to me!

Enter BURLEIGH.

Bur. Madam, your orders came, alas! too late.
Ere they arrived, the axe had fallen on Essex.
Rut. Ha! dead! What hell is this, that opens round me?
What fiend art thou, that draws the horrid scene?
Ah! Burleigh! bloody murderer! where's my husband?
Oh! where's my lord, my Essex?
Destruction seize, and madness rend, my brain!
See—see, they bend him to the fatal block!
Now—now the horrid axe is lifted high—
It falls—it falls! he bleeds—he bleeds! he dies!
Qu. Eliz. Alas! her sorrows pierce my suffering heart!
Rut. Eternal discord tear the social world,
And nature's laws dissolve! expunge—erase
The hated marks of time's engraving hand,
And every trace destroy! Arise, despair!
Assert thy rightful claim—possess me all!
Bear, bear me to my murdered lord—to clasp
His bleeding body in my dying arms!
And, in the tomb, embrace his dear remains,
And mingle with his dust—for ever! [*Exit.*
Qu. Eliz. Hapless woman!
She shall henceforth be partner of my sorrows;
And we'll contend who most shall weep for Essex.
Oh, quick to kill, and ready to destroy!
[*To* BURLEIGH.
Could no pretext be found—no cause appear,
To lengthen mercy out a moment more,
And stretch the span of grace!—Oh, cruel Burleigh!
This, this, was thy dark work, unpitying man!

Bur. My gracious mistress, blame not thus my duty,
My firm obedience to your high command.
The laws condemned him first to die; nor think
I stood between your mercy and his life.
It was the lady Nottingham, not I.
Herself confessed it all, in wild despair,
That, from your majesty to Essex sent
With terms of proffered grace, she then received,
From his own hand, a fatal ring, a pledge,
It seems, of much importance, which the earl,
With earnest suit and warm entreaty, begged her,
As she would prize his life, to give your majesty;
In this she failed—In this she murdered Essex.

Qu. Eliz. Oh, barbarous woman!
Surrounded still by treachery and fraud!
What bloody deed is this!—Thou injured Essex!
My fame is soiled to all succeeding times;
But Heaven alone can view my breaking heart—
Then let its will be done.

From hence, let proud, resisting mortals know
The arm parental, and the indulgent blow.
To Heaven's corrective rod submissive bend;
Adore its wisdom, on its power depend;
Whilst ruling justice guides eternal sway,
Let nature tremble, and let man obey.
[*Exeunt.*

EPILOGUE.

BY AN UNKNOWN HAND.

NEWS! news! good folks, rare news, and you shall know it—
I've got intelligence about the poet.
Who do you think he is?—You'll never guess;
An Irish bricklayer, neither more nor less.
And now the secret's out, you cannot wonder,
That in commencing bard he makes a blunder.
Has he not left the better for the worse,
In quitting solid brick for empty verse?
Can he believe the example of old Ben,
Who changed, like him, the trowel for the pen,
Will in his favour move your critic bowels?—
You rather wish most poet's pens were trowels.
One man is honest, sensible, and plain,
Nor has the poet made him pert, in vain:
No beau, no courtier, nor conceited youth;
But then so rude, he always speaks the truth.
I told him he must flatter, learn address,
And gain the heart of some rich patroness:
'Tis she, said I, your labours will reward,
If you but join the bricklayer with the bard;
As thus—should she be old, and worse for wear,
You must new-case her, front her, and repair;
If cracked in fame, as scarce to bear a touch,
You cannot use your trowel then too much;
In short, whate'er her morals, age, or station,
Plaster and whitewash in your dedication.
Thus I advised—but he detests the plan:
What can be done with such a simple man?
A poet's nothing worth, and nought availing,
Unless he'll furnish where there is a failing.
Authors in these good times are made and used,
To grant these favours nature has refused.
If he won't fish, what bounty can he crave?
We pay for what we want, not what we have.—
Nay, though of every blessing we have store,
Our sex will always wish—a little more.—
If he'll not bend his heart to do his duty,
And sell, to who will buy, wit, honour, beauty;
The bricklayer still for him the proper trade is,
Too rough to deal with gentlemen and ladies.

BARBAROSSA.

BY

BROWN.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY DAVID GARRICK, ESQ. AND SPOKEN BY HIM IN THE CHARACTER OF A COUNTRY BOY.

Measter! measter!
Is not my measter here among you, pray?
Nay, speak—my measter wrote this fine new play.——
The actor-folks are making such a clatter!
They want the pro-log—I know nought o' th' matter!
He must be there among you—look about—
A weezen pale-fac'd man, do—find him out——
Pray, measter, come—or all will fall to sheame;
Call mister,—hold—I must not tell his name.
Law! what a crowd is here! what noise and pother!
Fine lads and lasses! one o' top o' t' other.
[*Pointing to the rows of Pit and Gallery.*
I could for ever here with wonder geaze!
I ne'er saw church so full in all my days!
Your servant, surs!—what do you laugh for? Eh!
You donna take me sure for one o' the play?
You should not flout an honest country lad——
You think me fool, and I think you half mad:
You're all as strange as I, and stranger too,
And if you laugh at me, I'll laugh at you.
[*Laughing.*
I donna like your London tricks, not I,
And since you rais'd my blood, I'll tell you why;
And if you wull, since now I am before ye,
For want of pro-log, I'll relate my story.
I came from country here to try my fate,
And get a place among the rich and great;
But troth I'm sick o' th' journey I ha' ta'en,
I like it not——would I were home again!
First, in the city I took up my station,
And got a place with one o' th' corporation,
A round big man——he eat a plaguy deal,
Zooks, he'd have beat five plowmen at a meal!
But long with him I could not make abode,
For, could you think it?—he eat a great sea-toad!
He call'd it belly-patch and capapee!
Law, how I star'd—I thought—who knows but I
For want of monsters, may be made a pye!
Rather than tarry here for bribe or gain,
I'll back to whoame, and country fare again.
I left toad-eater; then I served a lord,
And there they promised—but ne'er kept their word.
While 'mong the great, this geaming work the trade is,
They mind no more poor servants, than their ladies.
A lady next, who lik'd a smart young lad,
Hir'd me forthwith—but, troth I thought her mad:
She turn'd the world top down, as I may say,
She chang'd the day to neet, the neet to day!
I stood one day with coach, and did but stoop
To put the foot-board down, and with her hoop
She cover'd me all o'er—"Where are you, lout?"
Here, ma'am, says I, for heav'n's sake let me out!
I was so sheam'd with all her freakish ways,
She wore her gear so short, so low her stays—
Fine folks shew all for nothing now-a-days!
Now I'm the poet's man—I find with wits
There's nothing sartain—nay, we eat by fits.
Our meals, indeed, are slender,—what of that?
There are but three on's—measter, I, and cat.
Did you but see us all, as I'm a sinner,
You'd scarcely say which of us three is thinnest.
My wages all depend on this night's piece,
But should you find that all our swans are geese,
E'feck I'll trust no more to measter's brain,
But pack up all, and whistle whoame again.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

BARBAROSSA, *Usurper of Algiers.*
SELIM, *Son to the deceased Prince.*
OTHMAN, *his Friend.*
SADI, *Friend to Othman.*
ALADIN, *Partizan of Barbarossa.*
Officer.
Slave.

WOMEN.

ZAPHIRA, *Widow of the deceased Prince.*
IRENE, *Daughter to Barbarossa.*
Slave.
Officers, Attendants, and Slaves.

SCENE,—*The Royal Palace of Algiers.*———*Time—A few hours about midnight.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter OTHMAN *and a Slave.*

Oth. A STRANGER, say'st thou, that enquires of Othman?
Slave. He does; and waits admittance.
Oth. Did he tell
His name and quality?
Slave. That he declined:
But called himself thy friend.
Oth. Where didst thou see him?
Slave. Even now, while twilight closed the day, I spied him
Musing amid the ruins of yon tower,
That overhangs the flood. On my approach,
With aspect stern, and words of import dark,
He questioned me of Othman. Then the tear
Stole from his eye. But when I talked of power
And courtly honours here conferred on thee,
His frown grew darker: 'All I wish,' he cried,
'Is to confer with him, and then to die!'
Oth. What may this mean?——Conduct the stranger to me. [*Exit Slave.*
Perhaps some worthy citizen, returned
From voluntary exile to Algiers,
Once known in happier days.

Enter SADI.

Ah, Sadi here!
My honoured friend!
Sadi. Stand off—pollute me not!
These honest arms, though worn with want, disdain
Thy gorgeous trappings, earned by foul dishonour.
Oth. Forbear thy rash reproaches: for beneath
This habit, which, to thy mistaken eye,
Confirms my guilt, I wear a heart as true
As Sadi's to my king.
Sadi. Why then beneath
This cursed roof, this black usurper's palace,
Dar'st thou to draw infected air, and live
The slave of insolence? Why lick the dust
Beneath his feet, who laid Algiers in ruin?
But age, which should have taught thee honest caution,
Has taught thee treachery!
Oth. Mistaken man!
Could passion prompt me to licentious speech
Like thine——
Sadi. Peace, false one! peace! The slave to power
Still wears a pliant tongue.—Oh, shame! to dwell
With murder, lust, and rapine! did he not
Come from the depths of Barca's solitude,
With fair pretence of faith and firm alliance?
Did not our grateful king, with open arms,
Receive him as his guest? O fatal hour!
Did he not, then, with hot, adulterous eye,
Gaze on the queen Zaphira? Yes, 'twas lust,
Lust gave the infernal whisper to his soul,
And bade him murder, if he would enjoy!
O complicated horrors! hell-born treachery!
Then fell our country, when good Selim died!
Yet thou, pernicious traitor, unabashed,
Canst wear the murderer's badge!
Oth. Mistaken man!
Yet hear me, Sadi——
Sadi. What can dishonour plead?
Oth. Yet blame not prudence.
Sadi. Prudence! the stale pretence of every knave!

The traitor's ready mask!
Oth. Yet still I love thee;
Still, unprovoked by thy intemperate zeal:
Could passion prompt me to licentious speech,
Bethink thee!—might I not reproach thy flight
With the foul names of fear and perfidy?
Didst thou not fly, when Barbarossa's sword
Reeked with the blood of thy brave countrymen?
What then did I?—Beneath this hated roof,
In pity to my widowed queen——
Sadi. In pity?
Oth. Yes, Sadi; Heaven is my witness, pity swayed me.
Sadi. Words, words! dissimulation all, and guilt!
Oth. With honest guile I did inrol my name
In the black list of Barbarossa's friends:
In hope, that some propitious hour might rise,
When heaven would dash the murderer from his throne,
And give young Selim to his orphaned people.
Sadi. Indeed! can'st thou be true?
Oth. By Heaven, I am.
Sadi. Why then dissemble thus?
Oth. Have I not told thee?
I held it vain to stem the tyrant's power
By the weak efforts of an ill-timed rage.
Sadi. Enough: I find thee honest; and with pride
Will join thy counsels. This, my faithful arm,
Wasted with misery, shall gain new nerves
For brave resolves. Can aught, my friend, be done?
Can aught be dared?
Oth. We groan beneath the scourge.
This very morn, on false pretence of vengeance
For the foul murder of our honoured king,
Five guiltless wretches perished on the rack.
Our long-loved friends, and bravest citizens,
Self-banished to the desert, mourn in exile:
While the fell tyrant lords it o'er a crew
Of abject sycophants, the needy tools
Of power usurped, and a degenerate train
Of slaves in arms.
Sadi. O my devoted country!
But say, the widowed queen—my heart bleeds for her.
Oth. If pain be life, she lives: But in such woe,
As want and slavery might view with pity,
And bless their happier lot! Hemmed round by terrors,
Of every joy through seven long years bereft,
She mourns her murdered lord, her exiled son,
Her people fallen! the murderer of her lord,
Returning now from conquest o'er the Moors,
Tempts her to marriage: spurred at once by lust,
And black ambition. But with noble firmness,
Surpassing female, she rejects his vows,
Scorning the horrid union. Meantime he,
With ceaseless hate, pursues her exiled son;
And—O detested monster [*He weeps.*
Sadi. Yet more deeds
Of cruelty! Just Heaven!
Oth. His rage pursues
The virtuous youth, even into foreign climes.
Ere this, perhaps, he bleeds. A murdering ruffian
Is sent to watch his steps, and plunge the dagger
Into his guiltless breast.
Sadi. Is this thy faith!
Tamely to witness to such deeds of horror!
Give me thy poignard; lead me to the tyrant.
What though surrounding guards——
Oth. Repress thy rage.
Thou wilt alarm the palace, wilt involve
Thyself, thy friend, in ruin. Haste thee hence;
Haste to the remnant of our loyal friends,
And let maturer councils rule thy zeal.
Sadi. Yet let us ne'er forget our prince's wrongs.
Remember, Othman, (and let vengeance rise)
How in the pangs of death, and in his gore
Weltering, we found our prince! The deadly dagger
Deep in his heart was fixed! His royal blood,
The life-blood of his people, o'er the bath
Ran purple! Oh, remember! and revenge!
Oth. Doubt not my zeal. But haste, and seek our friends.
Near to the western port Almanzor dwells,
Yet unseduced by Barbarossa's power.
He will disclose to thee if aught be heard
Of Selim's safety, or (what more I dread)
Of Selim's death. Thence best may our resolves
Be drawn hereafter. But let caution guide thee.
For in these walks, where tyranny and guilt
Usurp the throne, wakeful suspicion dwells,
And squint-eyed jealousy, prone to pervert,
Even looks and smiles to treason.
Sadi. I obey thee.
Near to the western port, thou say'st.
Oth. Even there;
Close by the blasted palm-tree, where the mosque
O'erlooks the city. Haste thee hence, my friend.
I would not have thee found within these walls.
[*Flourish.*
And hark! these warlike sounds proclaim the approach
Of the proud Barbarossa, with his train.
Begone——
Sadi. May dire disease and pestilence
Hang o'er his steps! Farewell—remember, Othman,
Thy queen's, thy prince's, and thy country's wrongs. [*Exit* SADI.
Oth. When I forget them, be contempt my lot!
Yet, for the love I bear them, I must wrap
My deep resentments in the specious guise
Of smiles, and fair deportment.

Enter BARBAROSSA, *Guards, &c.*

Bar. Valiant Othman,
Are these vile slaves impaled?
Oth. My lord, they are.
Bar. Did not the rack extort confession from them?
Oth. They died obdurate: while the melting crowd

Wept at their groans and anguish.
Bar. Curse on their womanish hearts! What, pity slaves,
Whom my supreme decree condemned to torture?
Are ye not all slaves, to whom my nod
Gives life or death?
Oth. To doubt thy will is treason.
Bar. I love thee, faithful Othman: but why sits
That sadness on thy brow; For oft I find thee
Musing and sad, while joy for my return,
My sword victorious, and the Moors o'erthrown,
Resounds through all my palace.
Oth. Mighty warrior!
The soul, intent on offices of love,
Will oft neglect, or scorn, the weaker proof
Which smiles or speech can give.
Bar. Well; be it so.
To guard Algiers from anarchy's misrule,
I sway the regal sceptre. Who deserves,
Shall meet protection: and who merits not,
Shall meet my wrath in thunder. But 'tis strange,
That when, with open arms, I would receive
Young Selim; would restore the crown, which death
Reft from his father's head——He scorns my bounty,
Shuns me with sullen and obdurate hate,
And proudly kindles war in foreign climes,
Against my power, who saved his bleeding country.
Oth. 'Tis strange indeed——

Enter ALADIN.

Ala. Brave prince, I bring thee tidings
Of high concern to Algiers and thee.
Young Selim is no more.
Oth. Selim no more! Indeed!
Bar. Indeed! why that astonishment?
He was our bitterest foe.
Oth. So perish all thy causeless enemies!
Bar. What says the rumour?
How died the prince, and where?
Ala. The rumour tells,
That flying to Oran, he there begged succours
From Ferdinand of Spain, to invade Algiers.
Bar. From Christian dogs
Oth. How! league with infidels!
Ala. And there held council with the haughty Spaniard,
To conquer and dethrone thee: but in vain:
For in a dark encounter with two slaves,
Wherein the one fell by his youthful arm,
Selim at length was slain.
Bar. Ungrateful boy!
Oft have I courted him to meet my kindness;
But still in vain; he shunned me like a pestilence:
Nor could I e'er behold him, since the down
Covered his manly cheek. How many years
Numbered he?
Oth. I think, scarce thirteen, when his father died;
And now, some twenty.
Bar. Othman, now for proof
Of undissembled service. Well I know,
Thy long experienced faith hath placed thee high
In the queen's confidence: the crown I wear
Yet totters on my head, till marriage rites
Have made her mine. Othman, she must be won.
Plead thou my cause of love: bid her dry up
Her fruitless tears: paint forth her long delays;
Wake all thy eloquence: Make her but mine,
And such unsought reward shall crown thy zeal,
As shall out-soar thy wishes.
Oth. Mighty king,
Where duty bids, I go.
Bar. Then haste thee, Othman,
Ere yet the rumour of her son's decease
Hath reached her ear; ere yet the mournful tale
Hath whelmed her in a new abyss of woe,
And quenched all soft affection, save for him.
Tell her, I come, borne on the wings of love!
Haste——fly——I follow thee. [*Exit* OTHMAN.
Now, Aladin,
Now fortune bears us to the wished-for port:
We ride secure on her most prosperous billow.
This was the rock I dreaded. Dost not think
The attempt was greatly daring?
Ala. Bold as needful.
What booted it, to cut the old serpent off,
While the young adder nested in his place?
Bar. True: We have conquered now. Algiers is mine,
Without a rival. Thus, great souls aspire;
And boldly snatch at crowns, beyond the reach
Of coward conscience. Yet I wonder much,
Omar returns not: Omar, whom I sent
On this high trust. I fear, 'tis he hath fallen.
Didst thou not say two slaves encountered Selim?
Ala. Ay, two; 'tis rumoured so.
Bar. And that one fell?
Ala. Even so: by Selim's hand; while his companion
Planted his happier steel in Selim's heart.
Bar. Omar, I fear, is fallen. From my right hand
I gave my signet to the trusty slave;
And bade him send it, as the certain pledge
Of Selim's death, if sickness or captivity,
Or wayward fate, should thwart his quick return.
Ala. The rumour yet is young; perhaps foreruns
The trusty slave's approach.
Bar. We'll wait the event.
Mean time give out, that now the widowed queen
Hath dried her tears, prepared to crown my love
By marriage-rites: spread wide the flattering tale:
For if persuasion win not her consent,
Power shall compel.
Ala. It is, indeed, a thought
Which prudence whispers.
Bar. Thou, brave Aladin,
Hast been the firm companion of my deeds:
Soon shall my friendship's warmth reward thy faith.
This night my will devotes to feast and joy,

For conquest o'er the Moor. Hence, Aladin;
And see the night-watch close the palace round.
[*Exit* ALADIN.
Now to the queen. My heart expands with hope.
Let high ambition flourish: in Selim's blood
Its root is struck: from this, the rising stem
Proudly shall branch o'er Afric's continent,
And stretch from shore to shore. My wayward daughter!

Enter IRENE.

What, drowned in tears? Still will thy folly thwart
Each purpose of my soul? When pleasures spring
Beneath our feet, thou spurn'st the proffered boon,
To dwell with sorrow. Why these sullen tears?
Irene. Let not these tears offend my father's eye;
They are the tears of pity. From the queen
I come, thy suppliant.
Bar. On some rude request.
What wouldst thou urge?
Irene. Thy dread return from war,
And proffered love, have opened every wound
The soft and lenient hand of time had closed.
If ever gentle pity touched thy heart,
Now, let it melt! urge not thy harsh command
To see her! her distracted soul is bent
To mourn in solitude. She asks no more.
Bar. She mocks my love. How many tedious years
Have I endured her coyness? Had not war,
And great ambition, called me from Algiers,
Ere this, my power had reaped what she denies:
But there's a cause, which touches on my peace,
And bids me brook no more her false delays.
Irene. Oh, frown not thus! Sure pity ne'er deserved
A parent's frown! but look more kindly on me.
Let thy consenting pity mix with mine,
And heal the woes of weeping majesty!
Unhappy queen!
Bar. What means that gushing tear?
Irene. Oh, never shall Irene taste of peace,
While poor Zaphira mourns!
Bar. Is this my child?
Perverse and stubborn!—As thou lov'st thy peace,
Dry up thy tears. What! damp the general triumph
That echoes through Algiers! which now shall pierce
The vaulted Heaven, as soon as fame shall spread
Young Selim's death, my empire's bitterest foe.
Irene. O generous Selim! [*Weeps.*
Bar. Ah! there's more in this!
Tell me, Irene, on thy duty, tell me,
As thou dost wish I would not cast thee off,
With an incensed father's curses on thee,
Now, tell me why, at this detested name of Selim,
Afresh thy sorrow streams?
Irene. Yes, I will tell thee,
For he is gone, and dreads thy hate no more!
My father knows, that scarce five moons are past,
Since the Moors seized, and sold me at Oran,
A hopeless captive in a foreign clime.
Bar. Too well I know, and rue the fatal day.
But what of this?
Irene. Why should I tell, what horrors
Did then beset my soul? Oft have I told thee,
How midst the throng, a youth appeared: his eye
Bright as the morning star!
Bar. And was it Selim?
Did he redeem thee?
Irene. With unsparing hand
He paid the allotted ransom: And o'erbade
Avarice and appetite. At his feet I wept,
Dissolved in tears of gratitude and joy.
But, when I told my quality and birth,
He started at the name of Barbarossa;
And thrice turned pale. Yet, with recovery mild,
'Go to Algiers,' he cried; 'protect my mother,
'And be to her, what Selim is to thee.'
Even such, my father, was the generous youth,
Who, by the hands of bloody, bloody men,
Lies numbered with the dead.
Bar. Amazement chills me!
Was this thy unknown friend concealed from me?
False, faithless child!
Irene. Could gratitude do less?
He said thy wrath pursued him; thence conjured me
Not to reveal his name.
Bar. Thou treacherous maid!
To stoop to freedom from thy father's foe!
Irene. Alas, my father!
He never was thy foe.
Bar. What! plead for Selim!
Away. He merited the death he found!
O coward! traitress to thy father's glory!
Thou shouldst have lived a slave, been sold to shame,
Been banished to the depth of howling deserts,
Been aught but what thou art, rather than blot
A father's honour by a deed so vile:
Hence, from my sight! Hence, thou unthankful child!
Beware thee: shun the queen: nor taint her ear
With Selim's fate. Yes, she shall crown my love;
Or, by our prophet, she shall dread my power!
[*Exit* BARBAROSSA.
Irene. Unhappy queen!
To what new scenes of horror art thou doomed!
O cruel father! hapless child! whom pity
Compels to call him cruel! Generous Selim!
Poor injured queen! She but intreats to die
In her dear father's tents! thither, good queen,
My care shall speed thee, while suspicion sleeps.
What though my frowning father pour his rage
On my defenceless head? Yet innocence
Shall yield her firm support; and conscious virtue
Gild all my days. Could I but save Zaphira,
Let the storm beat, I'll weep and pray, till she,
(Bereft of her loved lord, of every joy bereft!)
And heaven forget my father e'er was cruel.
[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

ZAPHIRA, *and female slaves discovered.*

Zaph. When shall I be at peace! O righteous heaven,
Strengthen my fainting soul, which fain would rise
To confidence in thee! But woes on woes
O'erwhelm me! first my husband, now my son,
Both dead! both slaughtered by the bloody hand
Of Barbarossa! Sweet content, farewell!
Farewell, sweet hope! grief is my portion here.
O dire ambition! what infernal power
Unchained thee from thy native depth of hell,
To stalk the earth with thy destructive train,
Murder and lust! to waste domestic peace,
And every heart-felt joy!

Enter OTHMAN.

O faithful Othman!
Our fears were true! my Selim is no more!
Oth. Has, then, the fatal secret reached thine ear?
Inhuman tyrant!
Zaph. Strike him, heaven, with thunder,
Nor let Zaphira doubt thy providence!
Oth. 'Twas what we feared. Oppose not heaven's high will,
Nor struggle with the ten-fold chain of fate,
That links thee to thy woes! Oh, rather yield,
And wait the happier hour, when innocence
Shall weep no more. Rest in that pleasing hope,
And yield thyself to heaven. My honoured queen,
The king—
Zaph. Whom stil'st thou king?
Oth. 'Tis Barbarossa.
He means to see thee——
Zaph. Curses blast the tyrant!
Does he assume the name of king?
Oth. He does.
Zaph. O title vilely purchased! by the blood
Of innocence! by treachery and murder!
May heaven incensed pour down its vengeance on him;
Blast all his joys, and turn them into horror;
Till phrenzy rise, and bid him curse the hour
That gave his crimes their birth! my faithful Othman,
My sole surviving prop! canst thou devise
No secret means, by which I may escape
This hated palace! with undaunted step
I'd roam the waste, to reach my father's vales
Of dear Mutija! Can no means be found,
To fly these blackening horrors that surround me?
Oth. That hope is vain. The tyrant knows thy hate;
Hence, day and night, his watchful guards environ thee,
Impenetrable as walls of adamant.
Curb, then, thy mighty griefs: justice and truth
He mocks as shadows. Rouse not then his anger;
Let soft persuasion and mild eloquence
Redeem that liberty, which stern rebuke
Would rob thee of for ever.
Zaph. Cruel task!
For royalty to bow, an injured queen
To kneel for liberty! and oh! to whom?
Even to the murderer of her lord and son!
O perish first Zaphira! yes, I'll die!
For what is life to me! my dear, dear lord!
My hapless child! yes, I will follow you.
Oth. Wilt thou not see him, then?
Zaph. I will not, Othman.
Or if I do, with bitter imprecation,
More keen than poison shot from serpents' tongues,
I'll pour my curses on him!
Oth. Will Zaphira
Thus meanly sink in woman's fruitless rage,
When she should wake revenge?
Zaph. Revenge! O tell me—
Tell me but how! what can a helpless woman?
Oth. Gain but the tyrant's leave, and reach thy father:
Pour thy complaints before him: let thy wrongs
Kindle his indignation to pursue
This vile usurper, till unceasing war
Blast his ill-gotten power.
Zaph. Ah! sayst thou, Othman? [*Rising.*
Thy words have shot like lightning through my frame,
And all my soul's on fire. Thou faithful friend!
Yes; with more gentle speech I'll soothe his pride;
Regain my freedom; reach my father's tents;
There paint my countless woes. His kindling rage
Shall wake the vallies into honest vengeance:
The sudden storm shall pour on Barbarossa,
And every glowing warrior steep his shaft
In deadlier poison, to revenge my wrongs.
Oth. There spoke the queen. But as thou lov'st thy freedom,
Touch not on Selim's death. Thy soul will kindle,
And passion mount in flames that will consume thee.
Zaph. My murder'd son! Yes, to revenge thy death,
I'll speak a language which my heart disdains.
Oth. Peace, peace! the tyrant comes: now, injured queen,
Plead for thy freedom, hope for just revenge,
And check each rising passion! [*Exit* OTHMAN.

Enter BARBAROSSA.

Bar. Hail, sovereign fair! Thrice honoured queen! in whom

Beauty and majesty conspire to charm!
Behold the conqueror, whose deciding voice
Can speak the fate of kingdoms, at thy feet
Lies vanquished by thy power!
Zaph. O Barbarossa!
No more the pride of conquest e'er can charm
My widowed heart! With my departed lord
My love lies buried! I should meet thy flame
With sullen tears and cold indifference.
Then turn thee to some happier fair, whose heart
May crown thy growing love, with love sincere!
For I have none to give.
Bar. Love ne'er should die:
'Tis the soul's cordial: 'tis the fount of life;
Therefore should spring eternal in the breast.
One object lost, another should succeed;
And all our life be love.
Zaph. Urge me no more: thou might'st with equal hope
Woo the cold marble weeping o'er a tomb,
To meet thy wishes. But if generous love
Dwell in thy breast, vouchsafe me proof sincere:
Give me safe convoy to the native vales
Of dear Mutija, where my father reigns.
Bar. O blind to proffered bliss! what! fondly quit
This lofty palace, and the envied pomp
Of empire, for an Arab's wandering tent,
Where the mock chieftain leads his vagrant tribes
From plain to plain, as thirst or famine sways;
Obscurely vain, and faintly shadows out
The majesty of kings! Far other joys
Here shall attend thy call: the winged bark
For thee shall traverse seas; and every clime
Be tributary to Zaphira's charms.
To thee, exalted fair, submissive realms
Shall bow the neck; and swarthy kings and queens,
From the far distant Niger and the Nile,
Drawn captive at my conquering chariot wheels,
Shall kneel before thee.
Zaph. Pomp and power are toys,
Which even the mind at ease may well disdain;
But, ah! what mockery is the tinsel pride
Of splendour, when by wasting woes the mind
Lies desolate within! Such, such is mine!
O'erwhelmed with ills, and dead to every joy;
Envy me not this last request, to die
In my dear father's tents.
Bar. Thy suit is vain—
Zaph. Thus kneeling at thy feet—I do beseech thee.
Bar. Thou thankless fair!
Thus to repay the labours of my love?
Had I not seized the throne when Selim died,
Ere this thy foes had laid Algiers in ruin:
I checked the warring powers, and gave you peace.
Zaph. Peace dost thou call it! what can worse be feared
From the war's rage, than violence and blood?
Have not unceasing horrors mark'd thy reign?
Through seven long years thy slaughtering sword hath reeked
With guiltless blood.
Bar. With guiltless blood? Take heed—
Rouse not my slumbering rage, nor vindicate
Thy country's guilt and treason!
Zaph. Where violence reigns, there innocence is guilt,
And virtue, treason. Know, Zaphira scorns
Thy menace. Yes; thy slaughtering sword hath reeked
With guiltless blood. Through thee exile and death
Have thinned Algiers. Is this thy boasted peace?
So might the tyger boast the peace he brings,
When he o'erleaps by stealth, and wastes the fold.
Bar. Ungrateful queen! I will give thee proof of love,
Beyond thy sex's pride! Make thee but mine,
I will descend the throne, and call thy son
From banishment to empire.
Zaph. Oh, my heart!
Can I bear this!
Inhuman tyrant! Curses on thy head!
May dire remorse and anguish haunt thy throne,
And 'gender in thy bosom fell despair!
Despair as deep as mine!
Bar. What means Zaphira?
What means this burst of grief?
Zaph. Thou fell destroyer!
Had not guilt steeled thy heart, awakening conscience
Would flash conviction on thee, and each look,
Shot from these eyes, be armed with serpent horrors,
To turn thee into stone! Relentless man!
Who did the bloody deed? Oh, tremble guilt,
Where'er thou art! Look on me! Tell me, tyrant,
Who slew my blameless son?
Bar. What envious tongue,
My foe, hath dared to taint my name with slander?
This is the rumour of some cozening slave,
Who thwarts my peace. Believe it not, Zaphira;
Thy Selim lives: nay, more, he soon shall reign,
If thou consent to bless me.
Zaph. Never, oh, never—Sooner would I roam
An unknown exile through the torrid climes
Of Afric, sooner dwell with wolves and tygers,
Than mount with thee my murdered Selim's throne!
Bar. Rash queen, forbear; think on thy captive state:
Remember, that within these palace walls,
I am omnipotent: that every knee
Bends at my dread approach: that shame and honour,
Reward and punishment, await my nod,
The vassals of my pleasure. Yield thee, then:
Avert the gathering horrors that surround thee,
And dread my power incensed.
Zaph. Dares thy licentious tongue pollute mine ear
With that foul menace! Tyrant! Dreadst thou not

The all-seeing eye of Heaven, its lifted thunder,
And all the reddening vengeance which it stores
For crimes like thine? Yet, know, Zaphira scorns thee!
Though robbed by thee of every dear support,
No tyrant's threat can awe the free-born soul,
That greatly dares to die. [*Exit* ZAPHIRA.
Bar. Where should she learn the tale of Selim's death!
Could Othman dare to tell it? If he did,
My rage shall sweep him, swifter than the whirlwind,
To instant death! Curse on her steadiness!
She lords it o'er my heart. There is a charm
Of majesty in virtue, that disarms
Reluctant power, and bends the struggling will
From her most firm resolve.

Enter ALADIN.

O Aladin!
Timely thou com'st, to ease my labouring thought,
That swells with indignation and despair.
This stubborn woman—
Ala. What, unconquered still?
Bar. The news of Selim's fate hath reached her ear.
Whence could this come?
Ala. I can resolve the doubt.
A female slave, attendant on Zaphira,
O'erheard the messenger who brought the tale,
And gave it to her ear.
Bar. Perdition seize her!
Nor threats can move, nor promise now allure
Her haughty soul: nay, she defies my power,
And talks of death, as if her female form
Inshrined some hero's spirit.
Ala. Let her rage foam.
I bring thee tidings that will ease thy pain.
Bar. Say'st thou? Speak on—Oh, give me quick relief!
Ala. The gallant youth is come, who slew her son.
Bar. Who? Omar?
Ala. No; Unhappy Omar fell
By Selim's hand. But Achmet, whom he joined
His brave associate, so the youth bids tell thee,
Revenged his death by Selim's.
Bar. Gallant youth!
Bears he the signet?
Ala. Ay.
Bar. That speaks him true.—Conduct him, Aladin. [*Exit* ALADIN.
This is beyond my hope. The secret pledge
Restored, prevents suspicion of the deed,
While it confirms it done.

Enter SELIM *disguised as* ACHMET, *and* ALADIN.

Selim. Hail, mighty Barbarossa! As the pledge [*Kneels.*
Of Selim's death, behold thy ring restored:
That pledge will speak the rest.
Bar. Rise, valiant youth!
But first, no more a slave—I give thee freedom.
Thou art the youth whom Omar (now no more)
Joined his companion in this brave attempt?
Selim. I am.
Bar. Then tell me how you sped.—Where found ye
That insolent?
Selim. We found him at Oran,
Plotting deep mischief to thy throne and people.
Bar. Well ye repaid the traitor.—
Selim. As we ought.
While night drew on, we leapt upon our prey.
Full at his heart brave Omar aimed the poignard;
Which Selim shunning, wrenched it from his hand,
Then plunged it in his breast. I hasted on,
Too late to save, yet I revenged my friend:
My thirsty dagger, with repeated blows,
Searched every artery: They fell together,
Gasping in folds of mortal enmity;
And thus in frowns expired.
Bar. Well hast thou sped.
Thy dagger did its office, faithful Achmet;
And high reward shall wait thee.—One thing more——
Be the thought fortunate!—Go, see the queen.
For know, the rumour of her Selim's death
Hath reached her ear: Hence dark suspicions rise,
Glancing at me. Go, tell her that thou saw'st
Her son expire; that with his dying breath,
He did conjure her to receive my vows,
And give her country peace.—That sure will lull
Suspicion. Aladin, that sure will win her.
Ala. 'Tis wisely thought.—It must.

Enter OTHMAN.

Bar. Most welcome, Othman.
Behold this gallant stranger. He hath done
The state good service. Let some high reward
Await him, such as may o'erpay his zeal.
Conduct him to the queen: for he hath news
Worthy her ear, from her departed son;
Such as may win her love—Come, Aladin;
The banquet waits our presence: festal joy
Laughs in the mantling goblet; and the night,
Illumined by the taper's dazzling beam,
Rivals departed day. [*Exeunt* BAR. *and* ALA.
Selim. What anxious thought
Rolls in thine eye, and heaves thy labouring breast?
Why join'st thou not the loud excess of joy,
That riots through the palace?
Oth. Dar'st thou tell me,
On what dark errand thou art here?
Selim. I dare.
Dost not perceive the savage lines of blood
Deform my visage? Read'st not in mine eye
Remorseless fury?—I am Selim's murderer.
Oth. Selim's murderer!
Selim. Start not from me.
My dagger thirsts not but for regal blood——
Why this amazement?
Oth. Amazement!—No—'Tis well—'Tis a it should be——
He was, indeed, a foe to Barbarossa.

Selim. And therefore to Algiers:—Was it not so?
Why dost thou pause? What passion shakes thy frame?
Oth. Fate, do thy worst! I can no more dissemble!——
Can I, unmoved, behold the murdering ruffian,
Smeared with my prince's blood!—Go, tell the tyrant,
Othman defies his power; that, tired with life,
He dares his bloody hand, and pleads to die.
Selim. What! didst thou love this Selim?
Oth. All men loved him.
He was of such unmixed and blameless quality,
That envy, at his praise, stood mute, nor dared
To sully his fair name! Remorseless tyrant!
Selim. I do commend thy faith. And since thou lov'st him,
I have deceived this tyrant Barbarossa:
Selim is yet alive.
Oth. Alive!
Selim. Nay more——
Selim is in Algiers.
Oth. Impossible!
Selim. Nay, if thou doubt'st, I'll bring him hither straight.
Oth. Not for an empire!
Thou might'st as well bring the devoted lamb
Into the tiger's den.
Selim. But I'll bring him
Hid in such deep disguise as shall deride
Suspicion, though she wear the lynx's eyes.
Not even thyself could'st know him.
Oth. Yes, sure: too sure to hazard such an awful
Trial!
Selim. Yet seven revolving years, worn out
In tedious exile, may have wrought such change
Of voice and feature in the state of youth,
As might elude thine eye.
Oth. No time can blot
The memory of his sweet majestic mien,
The lustre of his eye! besides, he wears
A mark indelible, a beauteous scar,
Made on his forehead by a furious pard,
Which, rushing on his mother, Selim slew.
Selim. A scar!
Oth. Aye, on his forehead.
Selim. What! like this? [*Lifting his turban.*
Oth. Whom do I see!—am I awake?—my prince! [*Kneels.*
My honoured, honoured king!
Selim. Rise, faithful Othman.
Thus let me thank thy truth! [*Embraces him.*
Oth. O happy hour!
Selim. Why dost thou tremble thus? Why grasp my hand?
And why that ardent gaze? Thou can'st not doubt me!
Oth. Ah, no! I see thy sire in every line.—
How did my prince escape the murderer's hand?
Selim. I wrenched the dagger from him, and gave back
That death he meant to bring. The ruffian wore
The tyrant's signet:—'Take this ring,' he cried,
'The sole return my dying hand can make thee
For its accursed attempt: this pledge restored,
Will prove thee slain: Safe may'st thou see Algiers,
Unknown to all.' This said, the assassin died.
Oth. But how to gain admittance thus unknown?
Selim. Disguised as Selim's murderer I come:
The accomplice of the deed: the ring restored,
Gained credence to my words.
Oth. Yet ere thou cam'st, thy death was rumoured here.
Selim. I spread the flattering tale, and sent it hither,
That babbling rumour, like a lying dream,
Might make belief more easy. Tell me, Othman,
And yet I tremble to approach the theme——
How fares my mother? does she still retain
Her native greatness?
Oth. Still: in vain the tyrant
Tempts her to marriage, though with impious threats
Of death or violation.
Selim. May kind Heaven
Strengthen her virtue, and by me reward it!
When shall I see her, Othman?
Oth. Yet, my prince,
I tremble for thy presence.
Selim. Let not fear
Sully thy virtue: 'tis the lot of guilt
To tremble. What hath innocence to do with fear?
Oth. Yet think—should Barbarossa——
Selim. Dread him not—
Thou know'st by his command I see Zaphira;
And wrapt in this disguise, I walk secure,
As if from Heaven some guarding power attending,
Threw ten-fold night around me.
Oth. Still my heart
Forebodes some dire event!—O quit these walls!
Selim. Not till a deed be done, which every tyrant
Shall tremble when he hears.
Oth. What means my prince?
Selim. To take just vengeance for a father's blood,
A mother's sufferings, and a people's groans.
Oth. Alas, my prince! thy single arm is weak
To combat multitudes!
Selim Therefore I come,
Clad in this murderer's guise—Ere morning shines,
This, Othman—this—shall drink the tyrant's blood. [*Shews a dagger.*
Oth. Heaven shield thy precious life—let caution rule
Thy headlong zeal!
Selim. Nay, think not that I come
Blindly impelled by fury or despair:
For I have seen our friends, and parted now
From Sadi and Almanzor.
Oth. Say——what hope?
My soul is all attention.—

Selim. Mark me, then;
A chosen band of citizens this night
Will storm the palace: while the glutted troops
Lie drenched in surfeit, the confederate city,
Bold through despair, have sworn to break their chains,
By one wide slaughter. I, mean time, have gained
The palace, and will wait the appointed hour,
To guard Zaphira from the tyrant's rage,
Amid the dreadful uproar.
Oth. Heaven protect thee——
'Tis dreadful—What's the hour?
Selim. I left our friends
In secret council. Ere the dead of night
Brave Sadi will report their last resolves.—
Now lead me to the queen.——
Oth. Brave prince, beware!
Her joy's or fear's excess would sure betray thee.
Thou shalt not see her till the tyrant perish!
Selim. I must.—I feel some secret impulse urge me.
Who knows that 'tis not the last parting interview,
We ever shall obtain?
Oth. Then, on thy life,
Do not reveal thyself.—Assume the name
Of Selim's friend: sent to confirm her virtue,
And warn her that he lives.
Selim. It shall be so; I yield me to thy will.
Oth. Thou greatly daring youth! May angels watch,
And guard thy upright purpose, that Algiers
May reap the blessings of thy virtuous reign,
And all thy godlike father shine in thee!
Selim. Oh, thou hast roused a thought, on which revenge
Mounts with redoubled fire!—Yes, here, even here,—
Beneath this very roof, my honoured father
Shed round his blessings, till accursed treachery
Stole on his peaceful hour! O blessed shade!
If yet thou hover'st o'er thy once lov'd clime,
Now aid me to redress thy bleeding wrongs!
Infuse thy mighty spirit into my breast,
Thy firm and dauntless fortitude, unawed
By peril, pain, or death! that, undismayed,
I may pursue the just intent, and dare
Or bravely to revenge, or bravely die. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter IRENE.

Irene. CAN air-drawn visions mock the waking eye?
Sure 'twas his image!—Yet, his presence here—
After full rumour had confirmed him dead!
Beneath this hostile roof to court destruction!
It staggers all belief! Silent he shot
Athwart my view, amid the glimmering lamps,
With swift and ghost-like step, that seemed to shun
All human converse. This way, sure, he moved.
But, oh, how changed! He wears no gentle smiles,
But terror in his frown. He comes.—'Tis he:—
For Othman points him hither, and departs.
Disguised, he seeks the queen: secure, perhaps,
And heedless of the ruin that surrounds him.
O generous Selim! can I see thee thus,
And not forewarn such virtue of its fate!
Forbid it gratitude!

Enter SELIM.

Selim. Be still, ye sighs!
Ye struggling tears of filial love, be still.
Down, down, fond heart!
Irene. Why, stranger, dost thou wander here?
Selim. Oh, ruin! [*Shunning her.*
Irene. Blest is Irene! blest, if Selim lives!
Selim. Am I betrayed!
Irene. Betrayed to whom? To her
Whose grateful heart would rush to death to save thee!
Selim. It was my hope
That time had veiled all semblance of my youth,
And thrown the mask of manhood o'er my visage.—
Am I then known?
Irene. To none, but love and me.—
To me, who late beheld thee at Oran;
Who saw thee here, beset with unseen peril,
And flew to save the guardian of my honour.
Selim. Thou sum of every worth! Thou heaven of sweetness!
How could I pour forth all my soul before thee,
In vows of endless truth!—It must not be!—
This is my destined goal!—The mansion drear,
Where grief and anguish dwell! where bitter tears,
And sighs, and lamentations, choak the voice,
And quench the flame of love!
Irene. Yet, virtuous prince,
Though love be silent, gratitude may speak.
Hear, then, her voice, which warns thee from these walls.
Mine be the grateful task, to tell the queen,
Her Selim lives. Ruin and death inclose thee.
O speed thee hence, while yet destruction sleeps!
Selim. Too generous maid! O Heaven! that Barbarossa
Should be Irene's father!
Irene. Injured prince,
Lose not a thought on me! I know thy wrongs,
And merit not thy love. No, learn to hate me.
Or, if Irene e'er can hope such kindness,
First pity, then forget me!
Selim. When I do,
May Heaven pour down its righteous vengeance on me!

Irene. Hence ! haste thee, hence !
Selim. Would it were possible !
Irene. What can prevent it ?
Selim. Justice ! fate, and justice !
A murdered father's wrongs !
Irene. Ah, prince, take heed !
I have a father too !
Selim. What did I say !—my father !—not my father.—
Can I depart till I have seen Zaphira ——
Irene. Justice, saidst thou ?
That word hath struck me like a peal of thunder !
Thine eye, which wont to melt with gentle love,
Now glares with terror ! Thy approach by night,
Thy dark disguise, thy looks and fierce demeanour,
Yes, all conspire to tell me, I am lost !
Ah ! prince, take heed ! I have a father too !
Think, Selim, what Irene must endure,
Should she be guilty of a father's blood !
Selim. A father's blood !
Irene. Too sure. In vain thou hid'st
Thy dire intent ! Forbid it Heaven, Irene
Should see destruction hovering o'er her father,
And not prevent the blow !
Selim. Is this thy love,
Thy gratitude to him who saved thy honour ?
Irene. 'Tis gratitude to him who gave me life :
He who preserved me claims the second place.
Selim. Is he not a tyrant, murderer ?
Irene. O spare my shame ! I am his daughter still !
Selim. Would'st thou become the partner of his crimes ?
Irene. Forbid it, Heaven !—Yet I must save a father !
Selim. Come on, then. Lead me to him. Glut thine eyes
With Selim's blood———
Irene. Was e'er distress like mine !
O Selim, can I see my father perish ?
Would I had ne'er been born ! [*Weeps.*
Selim. Thou virtuous maid !
My heart bleeds for thee !
Irene. Quit, O quit these walls !
Heaven will ordain some gentler, happier means,
To heal thy woes ! Thy dark attempt is big
With horror and destruction ! Generous prince !
Resign thy dreadful purpose, and depart !
Selim. May not I see Zaphira, ere I go ?
Thy gentle pity will not, sure, deny us
The mournful pleasure of a parting tear ?
Irene. Go, then, and give her peace. But fly these walls,
As soon as morning shines :—Else, though despair
Drives me to madness—yet—to save a father !
O Selim ! spare my tongue the horrid sentence !
Fly ! ere destruction seize thee ! [*Exit* IRENE.
Selim. Death and ruin !
Must I then fly ? what !—coward-like, betray
My father, mother, friends ! Vain terrors, hence !
Danger looks big to fear's deluded eye :
But courage, on the heights and steeps of fate,
Dares snatch her glorious purpose from the edge
Of peril : And while sickening caution shrinks,
Or, self betrayed, falls headlong down the steep,
Calm resolution, unappalled, can walk
The giddy brink, secure—Now to the queen.—
How shall I dare to meet her thus unknown !
How stifle the warm transports of my heart,
That pants at her approach !—Who waits the queen ?
Who waits Zaphira ?

Enter a Female Slave.

Slave. Whence this intrusion, stranger, at an hour
Destined to rest ?
Selim. I come to seek the queen,
On matter of such import, as may claim
Her speedy audience.
Slave. Thy request is vain.
Even now the queen hath heard the mournful tale
Of her son's death, and drowned in grief she lies.
Thou canst not see her.
Selim. Tell the queen, I come
On message from her dear, departed son ;
And bring his last request.
Slave. I'll haste to tell her.
With all a mother's tenderest love she'll fly,
To meet that name. [*Exit Slave.*
Selim. O ill-dissembling heart !—My ev'ry limb
Trembles with grateful terror !—Would to Heaven
I had not come ! Some look or starting tear,
Will sure betray me—Honest guile, assist
My faltering tongue !

Enter ZAPHIRA.

Zaph. Where is this pious stranger ?
Say, generous youth, whose pity leads thee thus
To seek the weeping mansions of distress,
Didst thou behold in death my hapless son !
Didst thou receive my Selim's parting breath ?
Did he remember me ?
Selim. Most honoured queen !
Thy son—Forgive these gushing tears that flow
To see distress like thine !
Zaph. I thank thy pity !
'Tis generous thus to feel for others woe—
What of my son ? Say, didst thou see him die ?
Selim. By Barbarossa's dread command I come,
To tell thee that these eyes alone beheld
Thy son expire.
Zaph. O Heaven !—my child ! my child !
Selim. That even in death, the pious youth remembered
His royal mother's woes.
Zaph. Where, where was I !
Relentless fate !—that I should be denied
The mournful privilege to see him die !
To clasp him in the agony of death,
And catch his parting soul ! Oh tell me all,
All that he said and looked ! Deep in my heart
That I may treasure every parting word,

Each dying whisper of my dear, dear son!
Selim. Let not my words offend.—What if he said,
Go, tell my helpless mother, that her tears
Have streamed too long: Then bid her weep no more:
Bid her forget the husband and the son,
In Barbarossa's arms!
Zaph. O basely false!
Thou art some creeping slave to Barbarossa,
Sent to surprise my unsuspecting heart!
Vile slave, begone!—My son betray me thus!—
Could he have e'er conceived so base a purpose,
My griefs for him should end in great disdain!—
But he was brave, and scorned a thought so vile!
Wretched Zaphira! How art thou become
The sport of slaves!—O griefs incurable!
Selim. Yet hope for peace, unhappy queen; Thy woes
May yet have end.
Zaph. Why weep'st thou, crocodile?
Thy treacherous fears are vain.
Selim. My tears are honest,
I am not what thou think'st.
Zaph. Who art thou then?
Selim. Oh, my full heart—I am—thy friend, and Selim's.
I come not to insult but heal thy woes.——
Now check thy heart's wild tumult, while I tell thee—
Perhaps—thy son yet lives.
Zaph. Lives! O gracious Heaven!
Do I not dream? say, stranger,—didst thou tell me,
Perhaps my Selim lives?—What do I ask?
Wild, wild, and fruitless hope!—What mortal power
Can e'er reanimate his mangled corse,
Shoot life into the cold and silent tomb,
Or bid the ruthless grave give up its dead!
Selim. O powerful Nature, thou wilt sure betray me! [*Aside.*
Thy Selim lives: For since his rumoured death,
I saw him at Oran.
Zaph. Ye heavenly powers!—
Didst thou not say, thou saw'st my son expire?
Didst not even now relate his dying words?
Selim. It was an honest falsehood, meant to prove
Zaphira's unstained virtue.
Zaph. Why—but Othman—
Othman affirmed, that my poor son was dead:
And I have heard, the murderer is come,
In triumph o'er his dear and innocent blood.
Selim. I am that murderer.—Beneath this guise,
I spread the abortive tale of Selim's death,
And haply won the tyrant's confidence.
Hence gained access: and from thy Selim, tell thee,
Selim yet lives, and honours all thy virtues.
Zaph. O generous youth! who art thou!—From what clime
Comes such exalted virtue, as dares give
A pause to griefs like mine!—As dares approach,
And prop the ruin tottering on its base,
Which selfish caution shuns?—Oh say—who art thou?
Selim. A friendless youth, self-banished with thy son;
Long his companion in distress and danger:
One who revered thy worth in prosperous days,
And more reveres thy virtue in distress.
Zaph. O gentle stranger—Mock not my woes,
But tell me truly—does my Selim live?
Selim. He does, by Heaven!
Zaph. O generous Heaven! thou at length o'erpay'st
My bitterest pangs, if my dear Selim lives!
And does he still remember
His father's wrongs, and mine?
Selim. He bade me tell thee,
That, in his heart indelibly are stamped
His father's wrongs, and thine: that he but waits
'Till awful justice may unsheath her sword,
And lust and murder tremble at her frown!
That, till the arrival of that happy hour,
Deep in his soul the hidden fire shall glow,
And his breast labour with the great revenge!
Zaph. Eternal blessings crown my virtuous son!
I feel my heart revive. Here, peace once more
Begins to dawn.
Selim. Much honoured queen, farewell.
Zaph. Not yet—not yet—indulge a mother's love!
In thee, the kind companion of his griefs,
Methinks I see my Selim stand before me.
Depart not yet. A thousand fond requests
Crowd on my mind. Wishes, and prayers, and tears,
Are all I have to give. O bear him these!
Selim. Take comfort then; for know, thy son, o'erjoyed
To rescue thee, would bleed at every vein!—
Bid her, he said, yet hope we may be blest!
Bid her remember, that the ways of Heaven,
Though dark, are just: that oft some guardian power
Attends, unseen, to save the innocent!
But if high Heaven decrees our fall, oh bid her
Firmly to wait the stroke, prepared alike
To live or die! and then he wept as I do.
Zaph. Eternal blessings crown my virtuous son!
O righteous Heaven! thou hast at length o'erpaid
My bitterest pangs; if my dear Selim lives,
And lives for me!—hear my departing prayer:
[*Kneels.*
O spare my son!—Protect his tender years!
Be thou his guide through dangers and distress!
Soften the rigours of his cruel exile,
And lead him to his throne!—When I am gone,
Bless thou his peaceful reign! Oh, early bless him
With the sweet pledges of connubial love;
That he may win his virtue's just reward,
And taste the raptures which a parent's heart
Reaps from a child like him! not for myself—
But my dear son—accept my parting tears!
[*Exit* ZAPHIRA.

Selim. Now, swelling heart,
Indulge the luxury of grief! flow tears!
And rain down transport in the shape of sorrow!
Yes, I have soothed her woes; have found her noble:
And to have given this respite to her pangs,
O'erpays all pain and peril.—Powerful virtue!
How infinite thy joys, when even thy griefs
Are pleasing!—Thou, superior to the frowns
Of fate, can'st pour thy sunshine o'er the soul,
And brighten woe to rapture!

Enter OTHMAN *and* SADI.

Honoured friends!
How goes the night?
Sadi. 'Tis well-nigh midnight.
Oth. What—In tears, my prince?
Selim. But tears of joy: for I have seen Zaphira,
And poured the balm of peace into her breast:
Think not these tears unnerve me, valiant friends,
They have but harmonized my soul; and waked
All that is man within me, to disdain
Peril, or death.—What tidings from the city?
Sadi. All, all is ready. Our confederate friends
Burn with impatience, till the hour arrive.
Selim. What is the signal of the appointed hour?
Sadi. The midnight watch gives signal of our meeting;
And when the second watch of night is rung,
The work of death begins.
Selim. Speed, speed, ye minutes!
Now let the rising whirlwind shake Algiers,
And justice guide the storm! Scarce two hours hence——
Sadi. Scarce more than one.
Selim. Oh, as ye love my life,
Let your zeal hasten on the great event!
The tyrant's daughter found, and knew me here,
And half suspects the cause.
Oth. Too daring prince,
Retire with us; her fears will sure betray thee!
Selim. What! leave my helpless mother here, a prey
To cruelty and lust—I'll perish first:
This very night the tyrant threatens violence:
I'll watch his steps; I'll haunt him through the palace;
And should he meditate a deed so vile,
I'll hover o'er him, like an unseen pestilence,
And blast him in his guilt!
Sadi. Intrepid prince!
Worthy of empire!—Yet accept my life,
My worthless life: do thou retire with Othman;
I will protect Zaphira.
Selim. Think'st thou, Sadi,
That, when the trying hour of peril comes,
Selim will shrink into a common man!
Worthless were he to rule, who dares not claim
Pre-eminence in danger. Urge no more;
Here shall my station be: and if I fall,
O friends, let me have vengeance!—Tell me, now,
Where is the tyrant?
Oth. Revelling at the banquet.
Selim. 'Tis good. Now, tell me how our powers are destined?
Sadi. Near every port, a secret band is posted:
By these the watchful centinels must perish:
The rest is easy: for the glutted troops
Lie drowned in sleep; the dagger's cheapest prey.
Almanzor, with his friends, will circle round
The avenues of the palace. Othman and I
Will join our brave confederates (all sworn
To conquer or to die), and burst the gates
Of this foul den. Then tremble, Barbarossa!
Selim. Oh, how the approach of this great hour
Fires all my soul! but, valiant friends, I charge you,
Reserve the murderer to my just revenge!
My poignard claims his blood.
Oth. Forgive me, prince!
Forgive my doubts!——Think—should the fair Irene—
Selim. Thy doubts are vain. I would not spare the tyrant,
Though the sweet maid lay weeping at my feet;
Nay, should he fall by any hand but mine,
By Heaven, I'd think my honoured father's blood
Scarce half revenged! My love, indeed, is strong,
But love shall yield to justice.
Sadi. Gallant prince!
Bravely resolved!
Selim. But is the city quiet?
Sadi. All, all is hushed. Throughout the empty streets,
Nor voice, nor sound. As if the inhabitants,
Like the presaging herds, that seek the covert
Ere the loud thunder rolls, had inly felt
And shunned the impending uproar.
Oth. There is a solemn horror in the night, too,
That pleases me: a general pause through nature:
The winds are hushed—
Sadi. And, as I passed the beach,
The lazy billow scarce could lash the shore:
No star peeps through the firmament of heaven—
Selim. And, lo! where eastward, o'er the sullen wave
The waning moon, deprived of half her orb,
Rises in blood: her beam, well-nigh extinct,
Faintly contends with darkness— [*Bell tolls.*
Hark!—what meant
That tolling bell?
Oth. It rings the midnight watch.
Sadi. This was the signal—
Come, Othman, we are called: the passing minutes
Chide our delay; brave Othman, let us hence.
Selim. One last embrace!—nor doubt, but, crowned with glory,
We soon shall meet again. But, oh, remember,
Amid the tumult's rage, remember mercy!
Stain not a righteous cause with guiltless blood!
Warn our brave friends, that we unsheath the sword,
Not to destroy, but save! nor let blind zeal,
Or wanton cruelty, e'er turn its edge
On age or innocence! or bid us strike

Where the most pitying angel in the skies,
That now looks on us from his blest abode,
Would wish that we should spare.
Oth. So may we prosper,
As mercy shall direct us!
Selim. Farewell, friends!
Sadi. Intrepid prince, farewell!
[*Exeunt* OTH. *and* SADI.
Selim. Now sleep and silence
Brood o'er the city.—The devoted centinel
Now takes his lonely stand; and idly dreams
Of that to-morrow he shall never see!
In this dread interval, O busy thought,
From outward things descend into thyself!
Search deep my heart! bring with thee awful conscience,
And firm resolve! that, in the approaching hour
Of blood and horror, I may stand unmoved;
Nor fear to strike where justice calls, nor dare
To strike where she forbids!—Why bear I, then,
This dark, insidious dagger?—'Tis the badge
Of vile assassins; of the coward hand
That dares not meet its foe.—Detested thought!
Yet—as foul lust and murder, though on thrones
Triumphant, still retain their hell-born quality;
So justice, groaning beneath countless wrongs,
Quits not her spotless and celestial nature;
But, in the unhallowed murderer's disguise,
Can sanctify this steel!
Then be it so:—Witness, ye powers of Heaven,
That not from you, but from the murderer's eye,
I wrap myself in night!—To you I stand
Revealed in noon-tide day!—Oh, could I arm
My hand with power! then, like to you, arrayed
In storm and fire, my swift avenging thunder
Should blast this tyrant. But since fate denies
That privilege, I'll seize on what it gives:
Like the deep-caverned earthquake, burst beneath him,
And whelm his throne, his empire, and himself,
in one prodigious ruin! [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter IRENE *and* ALADIN.

Irene. But didst thou tell him, Aladin, my fears
Brook no delay?
Ala. I did.
Irene. Why comes he not?
Oh, what a dreadful dream!—'Twas surely more
Than troubled fancy: never was my soul
Shook with such hideous phantoms!—Still he lingers!
Return, return; and tell him that his daughter
Dies, till she warn him of his threatening ruin!
Ala. Behold, he comes! [*Exit* ALA.

Enter BARBAROSSA *and Guards.*

Bar. Thou bane of all my joys!
Some gloomy planet surely ruled thy birth!
Even now thy ill-timed fear suspends the banquet,
And damps the festal hour.
Irene. Forgive my fear!
Bar. What fear, what phantom hath possessed thy brain?
Irene. Oh, guard thee from the terrors of this night;
For terrors lurk unseen!——
Bar. What terror?—speak!
Wouldst thou unman me into female weakness?
Say what thou dread'st, and why! I have a soul
To meet the blackest dangers undismayed.
Irene. Let not my father check, with stern rebuke,
The warning voice of nature. For even now,
Retired to rest, soon as I closed mine eyes,
A horrid vision rose—Methought I saw
Young Selim rising from the silent tomb;
Mangled and bloody was his corse; his hair
Clotted with gore; his glaring eyes on fire!
Dreadful he shook a dagger in his hand!
By some mysterious power he rose in air.
When, lo! at his command, this yawning roof
Was cleft in twain, and gave the phantom entrance!
Swift he descended, with terrific brow,
Rushed on my guardless father at the banquet,
And plunged his furious dagger in thy breast!
Bar. Wouldst thou appal me by a brain-sick vision?
Get thee to rest!—sleep but as sound till morn,
As Selim in his grave shall sleep for ever,
And then no haggard dreams shall ride thy fancy!
Irene. Yet hear me, dearest father!
Bar. To the couch!
Provoke me not.——
Irene. What shall I say to move him?
Merciful Heaven, instruct me what to do!

Enter ALADIN.

Bar. What mean thy looks!—Why dost thou gaze so wildly?
Ala. I hasted to inform thee, that even now,
Rounding the watch, I met the brave Abdalla,
Breathless, with tidings of a rumour dark,
Which runs throughout the city, that young Selim
Is yet alive——
Bar. May plagues consume the tongue
That broached the falsehood!—'Tis not possible—
What did he tell thee further?
Ala. More he said not;
Save only, that the spreading rumour waked
A spirit of revolt.
Irene. O, gracious father!
Bar. The rumour's false——And yet your coward fears
Infect me!—What!—shall I be terrified

By midnight visions?—Can the troubled brain
Of sleep outstretch the reason's waking eye?
I'll not believe it.
Ala. But this gathering rumour——
Think but on that, my lord!
Bar. Infernal darkness
Swallow the slave that raised it!—Yet I'll do
What caution dictates.—Hark thee, Aladin—
Slave, hear my will.——See that the watch be doubled——
Find out this stranger Achmet, and forthwith
Let him be brought before me.
Irene. O my father!
I do conjure thee, as thou lov'st thy life,
Retire, and trust thee to thy faithful guards——
See not this Achmet!
Bar. Not see him!—Death and torment!—
Think'st thou I fear a single arm that's mortal?
Not see him!—Forthwith bring the slave before me.——
If he prove false—If hated Selim live,
I'll heap such vengeance on him——
Irene. Mercy! mercy!
Bar. Mercy!—To whom?
Irene. To me—and to thyself—
To him—to all.—Thou think'st I rave; yet true
My visions are, as ever prophet uttered,
When Heaven inspires his tongue!
Bar. Ne'er did the moon-struck madman rave with dreams
More wild than thine!—Get thee to rest, ere yet
Thy folly wakes my rage!—Call Achmet hither.
Irene. Thus prostrate on my knees——O see him not!
Selim is dead.—Indeed the rumour's false;
There is no danger near:—Or, if there be,
Achmet is innocent!
Bar. Off, frantic wretch!
This ideot-dream hath turned her brain to madness!
Hence to thy chamber, till returning reason
Hath calmed this tempest.—On thy duty hence!
Irene. Yet hear the voice of caution!—Cruel fate!
What have I done!—Heaven shield my dearest father!
Heaven shield the innocent!—Undone Irene!
Whate'er the event, thy doom is misery!
[*Exit* IRENE.
Bar. Her words are wrapt in darkness. Aladin,
Forthwith send Achmet hither. Mark him well,
His countenance and gesture—Then, with speed,
Double the centinels. [*Exit* ALADIN.
Infernal guilt!
How dost thou rise in every hideous shape,
Of rage and doubt, suspicion and despair,
To rend my soul! more wretched far than they
Made wretched by my crimes! Why did I not
Repent, while yet my crimes were delible!
Ere they had struck their colours through my soul,
As black as night or hell! 'Tis now too late!—
Hence, then, ye vain repinings! Take me all,
Unfeeling guilt! O banish, if thou canst,
This fell remorse, and every fruitless fear!
Be this my glory—to be great in evil!
To combat my own heart, and, scorning conscience,
Rise to exalted crimes!

Enter SELIM.

Come hither, slave:
Hear me, and tremble: Art thou what thou seem'st?
Selim. Ha!
Bar. Dost thou pause! By hell, the slave's confounded!
Selim. That Barbarossa should suspect my truth!
Bar. Take heed! for, by the hovering powers of vengeance,
If I do find thee treacherous, I will doom thee
To death and torment, such as human thought
Ne'er yet conceived! Thou com'st beneath the guise
Of Selim's murderer. Now, tell me: Is not
That Selim yet alive?
Selim. Selim alive!
Bar. Perdition on thee! dost thou echo me?
Answer me quick, or die! [*Draws his dagger.*
Selim. Yes, freely strike—
Already hast thou given the fatal wound,
And pierced my heart with thy unkind suspicion!
Oh, could my dagger find a tongue, to tell
How deep it drank his blood!—But since thy doubt
Thus wrongs my zeal,—Behold my breast—strike here——
For bold is innocence.
Bar. I scorn the task. [*Puts up his dagger.*
Time shall decide thy doom. Guards! mark me well.
See that ye watch the motions of the slave:
And if he meditates to escape your eye,
Let your good sabres cleave him to the chine.
Selim. I yield me to thy will; and when thou know'st
That Selim lives, or seest his hated face,
Then wreak thy vengeance on me.
Bar. Bear him hence.
Yet, on your lives, await me within call.
I will have deeper inquisition made:
Haply some witness may confront the slave,
And drag to light his falsehood.
[*Exeunt* SELIM *and guards.*
Call Zaphira. [*Exit a slave.*
If Selim lives—then what is Barbarossa?
My throne's a bubble, and but floats in air,
Till marriage-rites declare Zaphira mine.
Fool that I am! to wait the weak effects
Of slow persuasion, when unbounded power
Can give me all I wish! Slave, hear my will;
Fly! bid the priest prepare the marriage-rites:
Let incense rise to Heaven; and choral songs
Attend Zaphira to the nuptial. [*Exit slave.*
I will not brook delay. By love and vengeance,
This hour decides her fate!

Enter ZAPHIRA.

Well, haughty fair!
Hath reason yet subdued thee? Wilt thou hear
The voice of love?
Zaph. Why dost thou vainly urge me?
Thou know'st my fixed resolve.
Bar. Can aught but frenzy
Rush on perdition!
Zaph. Therefore, shall no power
E'er make me thine.
Bar. Nay, sport not with my rage:
Though yon suspected slave affirms him dead,
Yet rumour whispers, that young Selim lives.
Zaph. Could I but think him so! my earnest prayer
Should rise to Heaven, to keep him far from thee!
Bar. Therefore, lest treachery undermine my power,
Know, that thy final hour of choice is come!
Zaph. I have no choice. Think'st thou I e'er will wed
The murderer of my lord?
Bar. Take heed, rash queen!
Tell me thy last resolve.
Zaph. Then hear me, Heaven!
Hear all ye powers that watch o'er innocence!
Angels of light! And thou, dear honoured shade
Of my departed lord! attend, while here
I ratify, with vows, my last resolve.
If e'er I wed this tyrant murderer,
If I pollute me with this horrid union,
Black as adultery or damned incest,
May ye, the ministers of Heaven, depart,
Nor shed your influence on the guilty scene!
May horror blacken all our days and nights!
May discord light the nuptial torch! and rising
From hell, may swarming fiends, in triumph, howl
Around the accursed bed!
Bar. Begone, remorse!
Guards do your office: Drag her to the altar:
Heed not her tears or cries. What!——dare ye doubt?
Instant obey my bidding; or, by hell,
Torment and death shall overtake you all.
[*Guards go to seize* ZAPHIRA.
Zaph. O spare me! Heaven protect me! O my son,
Wert thou but here, to save thy helpless mother!
What shall I do! Undone, undone Zaphira!

Enter SELIM.

Selim. Who called on Achmet? Did not Barbarossa
Require me here?
Bar. Officious slave, retire!
I called thee not.
Zaph. O kind and generous stranger, lend thy aid!
O rescue me from these impending horrors!
Heaven will reward thy pity!
Bar. Drag her hence!
Selim. Pity her woes, O mighty Barbarossa!
Bar. Rouse not my vengeance, slave!
Selim. O hear me, hear me! [*Kneels.*
Bar. Curse on thy forward zeal!
Selim. Yet, yet have mercy.
[*Lays hold of* BARBAROSSA'S *garment.*
Bar. Presuming slave, begone!
[*Strikes* SELIM.
Selim. Nay, then, die, tyrant!
[*Rises, and aims to strike* BARBAROSSA, *who wrests his dagger from him.*
Bar. Ah, traitor, have I caught thee! Hold! forbear!
[*To guards, who offer to kill* SELIM.
Kill him not yet. I will have greater vengeance.
Perfidious wretch! who art thou? Bring the rack:
Let that extort the secrets of his heart.
Selim. Thy impious threats are lost! I know that death
And torments are my doom. Yet, ere I die,
I'll strike thy soul with horror. Off, vile habit!
Let me emerge from this dark cloud that hides me,
And make my setting glorious! If thou dar'st,
Now view me! Hear me, tyrant! while with voice
More terrible than thunder, I proclaim,
That he, who aimed the dagger at thy heart,
Is Selim!
Zaph. O Heaven! my son! my son!
[*She faints.*
Selim. Unhappy mother! [*Runs to embrace her.*
Bar. Tear them asunder!
[*Guards separate them.*
Selim. Barbarous, barbarous ruffians!
Bar. Slaves, seize the traitor!
[*They offer to seize him.*
Selim. Off, ye vile slaves! I am your king!—Retire,
And tremble at my frown! That is the traitor;
That is the murderer, tyrant, ravisher! Seize him,
And do your country right!
Bar. Ah, coward dogs!
Start ye at words! or seize him, or by hell,
This dagger ends you all. [*They seize him.*
Selim. 'Tis done! Dost thou revive, unhappy queen!
Now arm my soul with patience!
Zaph. My dear son!
Do I then live, once more to see my Selim!
But oh—to see thee thus!— [*Weeping.*
Selim. Canst thou behold
Her speechless agonies, and not relent!
Bar. At length revenge is mine! slaves, force her hence!
This hour shall crown my love.
Zaph. O mercy, mercy!
Selim. Lo! Barbarossa! thou, at length, hast conquered!
Behold a hapless prince, o'erwhelmed with woes,
[*Kneels.*
Prostrate before thy feet! Not for myself
I plead! Yes, plunge the dagger in my breast!
Tear, tear me piece-meal! But, O spare Zaphira!
Yet, yet relent! force not her matron honour!
Reproach not Heaven!

Bar. Have I then bent thy pride?
Why, this is conquest even beyond my hope!
Lie there, thou slave! lie, till Zaphira's cries
Arouse thee from thy posture.
Selim. Dost thou insult my grief? unmanly wretch!
Curse on the fear that could betray my limbs,
[*Rising.*
My coward limbs, to this dishonest posture!
Long have I scorned, I now defy thy power.
Bar. I'll put thy boasted virtue to the trial.
Slaves, bear him to the rack.
Zaph. O spare my son!
Sure filial virtue never was a crime!
Save but my son! I yield me to thy wish!
What do I say? The marriage vow! O horror!
This hour shall make me thine.
Selim. What! doom thyself
The guilty partner of a murderer's bed,
Whose hands yet reek with thy dear husband's blood!
To be the mother of destructive tyrants,
The curses of mankind! By Heaven, I swear,
The guilty hour that gives thee to the arms
Of that detested murderer, shall end
This hated life!
Bar. Or yield thee, or he dies!
Zaph. The conflict's past—I will resume my greatness;
We'll bravely die, as we have lived, with honour! [*Embracing.*
Selim. Now, tyrant, pour thy fiercest fury on us:
Now, see, despairing guilt! that virtue still
Shall conquer, though in ruin.
Bar. Drag them hence!
Her to the altar: Selim to his fate.
Zaph. O Selim! O my son! Thy doom is death!
Would it were mine!
Selim. Would I could give it thee!
Is there no means to save her! lend, ye guards,
Ye ministers of death, in pity lend
Your swords, or some kind weapon of destruction!
Sure the most mournful boon, that ever son
Asked for the best of mothers!
Zaph. Dearest Selim!
Bar. I'll hear no more. Guards, bear them to their fate! [*Guards seize them*
Selim. One last embrace!
Farewell! Farewell for ever!
[*Guards struggle with them.*
Zaph. One moment yet! Pity a mother's pangs!
O Selim!
Selim. O my mother!
[*Exeunt* SELIM *and* ZAPHIRA.
Bar. My dearest hopes are blasted! What is power,
If stubborn virtue thus outsoar its flight!
Yet he shall die—and she—

Enter ALADIN.

Ala. Heaven guard my lord!
Bar. What mean'st thou, Aladin?
Ala. A slave arrived,
Says that young Selim lives: nay, somewhere lurks
Within these walls.
Bar. The lurking traitor's found,
Convicted, and disarmed. Even now he aimed
This dagger at my heart.
Ala. Audacious traitor!
The slave says, farther, that he brings the tidings
Of dark conspiracy, now hovering o'er us,
And claims thy private ear.
Bar. Of dark conspiracy!
Where? Among whom?
Ala. The secret friends of Selim,
Who nightly haunt the city.
Bar. Curse the traitors!
Now speed thee, Aladin. Send forth our spies:
Explore their haunts: for, by the infernal powers,
I will let loose my rage. The furious lion
Now foams indignant, scorning tears and cries.
Let Selim forthwith die. Come, mighty vengeance!
Stir me, grim cruelty: The rack shall groan
With new-born horrors! I will issue forth,
Like midnight pestilence: my breath shall strew
The streets with dead; and havock stalk in gore.
Hence, pity! Feed the milky thought of babes;
Mine is of bloodier hue. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter BARBAROSSA, ALADIN, *and Guards.*

Bar. Is the watch doubled? Are the gates secured
Against surprise?
Ala. They are; and mock the attempt
Of force or treachery.
Bar. This whispered rumour
Of dark conspiracy, on farther inquest,
Seems but a false alarm. Our spies, sent out,
And now returned from search, affirm that sleep
Has wrapped the city.
Ala. But while Selim lives,
Destruction lurks within the palace walls;
Nor bars, nor centinels, can give us safety.
Bar. Right, Aladin. His hour of fate approaches.
How goes the night?
Ala. The second watch is near.
Bar. 'Tis well! Whene'er it rings, the traitor dies;
So hath my will ordained. I'll seize the occasion,
While I may fairly plead my life's defence.
Ala. True; for he aimed his dagger at thy heart.

Bar. He did. Hence, justice, uncompelled, shall seem
To lend her sword, and do ambition's work.
Ala. His bold resolves have steeled Zaphira's breast
Against thy love: thence he deserves to die.
Bar. And death's his doom—yet first the rack shall rend
Each secret from his heart; unless he give
Zaphira to my arms, by marriage vows,
With full consent, ere yet the second watch
Toll for his death. Curse on this woman's weakness!
I yet would win her love! Haste! seek out Othman!
Go, tell him, that destruction and the sword
Hang o'er young Selim's head, if swift compliance
Plead not his pardon. [*Exit* ALADIN.
Stubborn fortitude!
Had he not interposed, success had crowned
My love, now hopeless. Then let vengeance seize him!

Enter IRENE.

Irene. O night of horror! Hear me, honoured father!
If e'er Irene's peace was dear to thee,
Now hear me!
Bar. Impious! Dar'st thou disobey?
Did not my sacred will ordain thee hence?
Get thee to rest; for death is stirring here.
Irene. O fatal words! By every sacred tye,
Recall the dire decree!
Bar. What would'st thou say?
Whom plead for?
Irene. For a brave unhappy prince,
Sentenced to die.
Bar. And justly! But this hour
The traitor half fulfilled thy dream, and aimed
His dagger at my heart.
Irene. Might pity plead!
Bar. What! plead for treachery?
Irene. Yet pity might bestow a milder name.
Wouldst thou not love the child, whose fortitude
Should hazard life for thee? Oh, think on that:
The noble mind hates not a virtuous foe:
His generous purpose was to save a mother!
Bar. Damned was his purpose: and accurst art thou,
Whose perfidy would save the dark assassin,
Who sought thy father's life! Hence, from my sight!
Irene. Oh, never, till thy mercy spare my Selim!
Bar. Thy Selim! Thine!
Irene. Thou know'st—by gratitude
He's mine—Had not his generous hand redeemed me,
What then had been Irene? Oh!
Bar. Faithless wretch!
Unhappy father! whose perfidious child
Leagues with his deadliest foe, and guides the dagger
Even to his heart! Perdition catch thy falsehood!
And is it thus, a thankless child repays me,
For all the guilt in which I plunged my soul,
To raise her to a throne!
Irene. O spare these words,
More keen than daggers to my bleeding heart!
Let me not live suspected! Dearest father!
Behold my breast! write thy suspicions here:
Write them in blood; but spare the generous youth,
Who saved me from dishonour!
Bar. By the powers
Of great revenge, thy fond intreaties seal
His instant death! In him I'll punish thee.
Away!
Irene. Yet hear me, ere my tortured soul
Rush on some deed of horror!
Bar. Seize her, guards!
Convey the frantic ideot from my presence:
See that she do no violence on herself.
Irene. O Selim! generous youth! how have my fears
Betrayed thee to destruction! Slaves, unhand me!
Think ye, I'll live to bear these pangs of grief,
These horrors that oppress my tortured soul!
Inhuman father! generous, injured prince!
Methinks I see thee stretched upon the rack,
Hear thy expiring groans: O horror! horror!
What shall I do to save him! Vain, alas!
Vain are my tears and prayers—at least, I'll die.
Death shall unite us yet!
[*Exit* IRENE *and guards.*
Bar. O torment! torment!
Even in the midst of power! the vilest slave
More happy far than I! the very child,
Whom my love cherished from her infant years,
Conspires to blast my peace! O false ambition,
Thou lying phantom! whither hast thou lured me!
Even to this giddy height, where now I stand,
Forsaken, comfortless! with not a friend
In whom my soul can trust!

Enter ALADIN.

Now, Aladin?
Hast thou seen Othman?
He will not, sure, conspire against my peace.
Ala. He's fled, my lord. I dread some lurking ruin.
The centinel on watch says, that he passed
The gate, since midnight, with an unknown friend;
And as they passed, Othman in whispers said,
Now farewell, bloody tyrant.
Bar. Slave, thou liest.
He did not dare to say it; or, if he did,
Pernicious slave, why dost thou wound my ear
By the foul repetition?—Gracious powers,
Let me be calm!—O my distracted soul!
How am I rent in pieces! Othman fled!
Why then may all hell's curses follow him!
What's to be done? some mischief lurks unseen.
Ala. Prevent it then—
Bar. By Selim's instant death—
Ala. Ay, doubtless.

Bar. Is the rack prepared?
Ala. 'Tis ready.
Along the ground he lies o'erwhelmed with chains.
The ministers of death stand round, and wait
Thy last command.
Bar. Once more I'll try to bend
His stubborn soul.—Conduct me forthwith to him:
And if he now refuse my proffered kindness,
Destruction swallows him! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

SELIM *discovered in chains, Executioners, Officers, &c. and the rack.*

Selim. I pray you, friends,
When I am dead, let not indignity
Insult these poor remains; see them interred
Close by my father's tomb; I ask no more.
Offi. They shall.
Selim How goes the night?
Offi. Thy hour of fate,
The second watch, is near.
Selim. Let it come on;
I am prepared.

Enter BARBAROSSA *and Guards.*

Bar. So—raise him from the ground.—
[*They raise him.*
Perfidious boy! behold the just rewards
Of guilt and treachery! Didst thou not give
Thy forfeit life, whene'er I should behold
Selim's detested face?
Selim. Then take it, tyrant.
Bar. Didst thou not aim a dagger at my heart?
Selim. I did.
Bar. Yet Heaven defeated thy intent,
And saved me from the dagger.
Selim. 'Tis not ours
To question Heaven. The intent, and not the deed,
Is in our power: and therefore, who dares greatly
Does greatly.
Bar. Yet bethink thee, stubborn boy,
What horrors now surround thee—
Selim. Think'st thou, tyrant,
I came so ill prepared?—Thy rage is weak,
Thy torments powerless o'er the steady mind:
He who can bravely dare, can bravely suffer.
Bar. Yet, lo! I come, by pity led, to spare thee.
Relent, and save Zaphira!—For the bell
Even now expects the centinel, to toll
The signal of thy death.
Selim. Let guilt like thine
Tremble at death: I scorn his darkest frown.
Hence, tyrant, nor prophane my dying hour!
Bar. Then take thy wish. [*Bell tolls.*
There goes the fatal knell.
Thy fate is sealed.—Not all thy mother's tears,
Nor prayers, nor eloquence of grief, shall save thee
From instant death. Yet ere the assassin die,
Let torment wring each secret from his heart.
The traitor Othman's fled;—Conspiracy
Lurks in the womb of night, and threatens ruin.
Spare not the rack, nor cease, till it extort
The lurking treason; and this murderer call
On death, to end his woes. [*Exit* BAR.
Selim. Come on, then. [*They bind him.*
Begin the work of death—what! bound with cords,
Like a vile criminal!—O valiant friends,
When will ye give me vengeance!

Enter IRENE.

Irene. Stop, O stop!
Hold your accursed hands!—On me, on me
Pour all your torments!—How shall I approach thee!
Selim. These are thy father's gifts!—Yet thou art guiltless;
Then let me take thee to my heart, thou best,
Most amiable of women!
Irene. Rather curse me,
As the betrayer of thy virtue!
Selim. Ah!
Irene. 'Twas I—my fears, my frantic fears betrayed thee!
Thus falling at thy feet, may I but hope
For pardon ere I die!
Selim. Hence to thy father!
Irene. Never, O never!—Crawling in the dust,
I'll clasp thy feet, and bathe them with my tears!
Tread me to earth, I never will complain;
But my last breath shall bless thee!
Selim. Loved Irene!
What hath my fury done?
Irene. Indeed, 'twas hard;
But I was born to sorrow!
Selim. Melt me not.
I cannot bear thy tears;—they quite unman me.
Forgive the transports of my rage.
Irene. Alas!
The guilt is mine: Canst thou forgive those fears
That first awaked suspicion in my father?
Those fears that have undone thee!—Heaven is witness,
They meant not ill to thee!
Selim. None, none, Irene!
No; 'twas the generous voice of filial love:
That, only, prompted thee to save a father.
Yes; from my inmost soul I do approve
That virtue which destroys me.
Irene. Canst thou, then,
Forgive and pity me?
Selim. I do—I do.
Irene. On my knees,
Thus let me thank thee, generous, injured prince!
O earth and Heaven! that such unequalled worth
Should meet so hard a fate!—That I—that I—
Whom his love rescued from the depth of woe,
Should be the accurst destroyer!—Strike, in pity,
And end this hated life!
Selim. Cease, dear Irene.
Submit to Heaven's high will.—I charge thee, live;
And to thy utmost power, protect from wrong
My helpless, friendless mother!
Irene. With my life
I'll shield her from each wrong.—That hope alone

Can tempt me to prolong a life of woe.
Selim. O my ungoverned rage!—to frown on thee!
Thus let me expiate the cruel wrong, [*Embracing.*
And mingle rapture with the pains of death!
Offi. No more.—Prepare the rack.
Irene. Stand off, ye fiends!
Here will I cling. No power on earth shall part us,
Till I have saved my Selim! [*A shout.*
Offi. Hark! what noise
Strikes on my ear?
Selim. Again! [*A shout.*
Ala. Arm, arm!—Treachery and murder! [*Without.*
[*Executioners go to seize* SELIM.
Selim. Off, slaves!—Or I will turn my chains to arms,
And dash you piece-meal!—for I have heard a sound
Which lifts my towering soul to Atlas' height,
That I could prop the skies!
Ala. Where is the king?
The foe pours in. The palace gates art burst:
The centinels are murdered! Save the king!
They seek him through the palace!
Offi. Death and ruin!
Follow me, slaves, and save him.
[*Exeunt Officer and Executioners.*
Selim. Now, bloody tyrant! Now, thy hour is come!
Irene. What means yon maddening tumult!—O my fears!
Selim. Vengeance at length hath pierced these guilty walls,
And walks her deadly round!
Irene. Whom dost thou mean? my father!
Selim. Yes: thy father;
Who murdered mine!
Irene. Is there no room for mercy?
O Selim! by our love!—
Selim. Thy tears are vain!
Vain were thy eloquence, though thou didst plead
With an archangel's tongue!
Irene. Spare but his life!
Selim. Heaven knows I pity thee. But he must bleed;
Though my own life-blood, nay, though thine, more dear,
Should issue at the wound.
Irene. Must he then die?
Let me but see my father, ere he perish!
Let me but pay my parting duty to him!—
[*Clash of swords.*
Hark!—'twas the clash of swords! Heaven save my father!
O cruel, cruel Selim! [*Exit* IRENE.
Selim. Curse on this servile chain, that binds me fast,
In powerless ignominy; while my sword
Should haunt its prey, and cleave the tyrant down! [*Without.*
Oth. Where is the prince!
Selim. Here, Othman, bound to earth!
Set me but free!—O cursed, cursed chains!

Enter OTHMAN *and party, who free* SELIM.

Oth. O my brave prince!—Heaven favours our design. [*Embraces him.*
Take that:—I need not bid thee use it nobly.
[*Giving him a sword.*
Selim. Now, Barbarossa, let my arm meet thine:
'Tis all I ask of Heaven! [*Exit* SELIM.
Oth. Guard ye the prince— [*Part go out.*
Pursue his steps.—Now this way let us turn,
And seek the tyrant. [*Exeunt* OTHMAN, *&c.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to the open Palace.*

Enter BARBAROSSA.

Bar. Empire is lost and life: Yet brave revenge
Shall close my life in glory.

Enter OTHMAN.

Have I found thee,
Dissembling traitor!—Die!—
Oth. Long hath my wish,
Pent in my struggling breast, been robbed of utterance.
Now valour scorns the mask.—I dare thee, tyrant!
And, armed with justice, thus would meet thy rage,
Though thy red right-hand grasped the pointed thunder!
Now, Heaven decide between us! [*They fight.*
Bar. Coward!
Oth. Tyrant!
Bar. Traitor!
Oth. Infernal fiend, thy words are fraught with falsehood:
To combat crimes like thine, by force or wiles,
Is equal glory. [BAR. *falls.*
Bar. I faint! I die!—O horror!

Enter SELIM *and* SADI.

Selim. The foe gives way: sure this way went the storm.
Where is the tiger fled!—What do I see!
Sadi. Algiers is free!
Oth. This sabre did the deed!
Selim. I envy thee the blow.——Yet valour scorns
To wound the fallen,—But if life remain,
I will speak daggers to his guilty soul.
Hoa! Barbarossa! Tyrant! Murderer!
'Tis Selim, Selim calls thee!
Bar. Off, ye fiends!
Torment me not!—O Selim, art thou there?—
Swallow me, earth! Bury me deep, ye mountains!
Accursed be the day that gave me birth!
Oh, that I ne'er had wrong'd thee!
Selim. Dost thou, then,
Repent thee of thy crimes?—He does! He does!
He grasps my hand! See, the repentant tear
Starts from his eye!—Dost thou indeed repent?
Why then I do forgive thee: From my soul
I freely do forgive thee!—And if crimes,

Abhorred as thine, dare plead to Heaven for mercy,—
May Heaven have mercy on thee!
Bar. Generous Selim!
Too good—I have a daughter! Oh, protect her!
Let not my crimes— [*Dies.*
Oth. There fled the guilty soul!
Selim. Haste to the city—stop the rage of slaughter.
Tell my brave people that Algiers is free,
And tyranny no more. [*Exeunt slaves.*
Sadi. And to confirm
The glorious tidings, soon as morning shines,
Be his dead carcase dragged throughout the city,
A spectacle of horror!
Selim. Curb thy zeal,
Let us be brave, not cruel: nor disgrace
Valour, by barbarous and inhuman deeds.
Black was his guilt: and he hath paid his life,
The forfeit of his crimes. Then sheath the sword:
Let vengeance die.—Justice is satisfied.

Enter ZAPHIRA.

Zaph. What mean these horrors! wheresoe'er I turn
My trembling steps, I find some dying wretch,
Weltering in gore! And dost thou live, my Selim?
Selim. Lo, there he lies!
Zaph. The bloody tyrant slain!
O righteous Heaven!
Selim. Behold thy valiant friends,
Whose faith and courage have o'erwhelmed the power
Of Barbarossa. Here once more, thy virtues
Shall dignify the throne, and bless the people.
Zaph. Just are thy ways, O Heaven!—Vain terrors, hence!
Once more Zaphira's blest!—My virtuous son,
How shall I e'er repay thy boundless love!
Thus let me snatch thee to my longing arms,
And on thy bosom weep my griefs away!
Selim. O happy hour!—happy, beyond the flight
Even of my ardent hope!—look down, blest shade,
From the bright realms of bliss!—Behold thy queen
Unspotted, unseduced, unmoved in virtue!
Behold the tyrant prostrate at my feet!
And to the memory of thy bleeding wrongs,
Accept this sacrifice!
Zaph. My generous Selim!
Selim. Where is Irene?
Sadi. With looks of wildness, and distracted mien,
She sought her father where the tumult raged;
She passed me, while the coward Aladin
Fled from my sword: and as I cleft him down,
She fainted at the sight.
Oth. But soon recovered;
Zamor, our trusty friend, at my command,
Conveyed the weeping fair one to her chamber.
Selim. Thanks to thy generous care:—Come, let us seek
The afflicted maid.
Zaph. Her virtues might atone
For all her father's guilt. The throne be her's:
She merits all thy love.
Selim. Then haste and find her.—O'er her father's crimes
Pity shall draw her veil; nay half absolve them,
When she beholds the virtues of his child!——
Now, let us thank the Eternal Power, convinced
That Heaven but tries our virtue by affliction:
That oft the cloud which wraps the present hour,
Serves but to brighten all our future days!
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

BY DAVID GARRICK, ESQ. SPOKEN BY MR WOODWARD, IN THE CHARACTER OF A FINE GENTLEMAN.

Enters—speaking to the people without.

PSHAW—damn your Epilogue,—and hold your tongue—
Shall we of rank be told what's right or wrong?
Had you ten Epilogues, you should not speak 'em,
Though he had writ 'em all in Linguam Grecam.
I'll do't, by all the gods!—(you must excuse me)
Though author, actors, audience all abuse me!

To the audience.

Behold a gentleman!—and that's enough!
Laugh, if you please—I'll take a pinch of snuff!
I come to tell you—(let it not surprise you)
That I'm a wit—and worthy to advise you.—
How could you suffer that same country booby,
The Prologue-speaking savage, that great looby,
To talk his nonsense?—give me leave to say
'Twas low—damn'd low!—but save the fellow's play—
Let the poor devil eat,—allow him that,
And give a meal to *measter*, *mon*, and *cat*;
But why attack the fashion?—Senseless rogue!
We have no joys but what result from vogue:

The mode should all control—nay every passion,
Sense, appetite, and all, give way to fashion:
I hate as much as he a turtle-feast,
But till the present turtle-rage has ceas'd,
I'll ride a hundred miles to make myself a beast,
I have no ears, yet op'ras I adore!
Always prepar'd to die—to sleep—no more!
The ladies, too, were carp'd at, and their dress:
He wants 'em all ruff'd up like good queen Bess!
They are, forsooth, too much exposed and free,—
Were more expos'd no ill effects I see,
For more, or less, 'tis all the same to me.
Poor gaming, too, was maul'd among the rest,
That precious cordial to a high-life breast!
When thoughts arise I always game or drink,
An English gentleman should never think—
The reason's plain, which every soul might hit on—
What trims a Frenchman oversets a Briton;
In us reflection breeds a sober sadness,
Which always ends in politics or madness:
I therefore now propose—by your command,
That tragedies no more shall cloud this land;
Send o'er your Shakspeares to the sons of France,
Let *them* grow grave,—Let *us* begin to dance!
Banish your gloomy scenes to foreign climes,
Preserve alone to bless these golden times,
A farce or two—and Woodward's pantomimes!

DOUGLAS.

BY

HOME.

PROLOGUE.

In ancient times, when Britain's trade was arms,
And the lov'd music of her youth alarms;
A godlike race sustain'd fair England's fame:
Who has not heard of godlike Percy's fame?
Ay, and of Douglas? Such illustrious foes
In rival Rome and Carthage never rose!
From age to age bright shone the British fire,
And every hero was a hero's sire.
When powerful fate decreed one warrior's doom,
Up sprung the phœnix from his parent's tomb.
But whilst those gen'rous rivals fought and fell,
Those gen'rous rivals lov'd each other well:
Though many a bloody field was lost and won,
Nothing in hate, in honour all was done.
When Percy, wrong'd, defied his prince or peers
Fast came the Douglas with his Scottish spears
And, when proud Douglas made his king his foe
For Douglas, Percy bent his English bow.
Expell'd their native homes by adverse fate,
They knock'd alternate at each other's gate:
Then blaz'd the castle, at the midnight hour,
For him whose arms had shook its firmest tow'r.
This night a Douglas your protection claims;
A wife! a mother! Pity's softest names:
The story of her woes indulgent hear,
And grant your suppliant all she begs, a tear.
In confidence she begs; and hopes to find
Each English breast, like noble Percy's, kind.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Lord RANDOLPH, *a Scottish Baron.*
GLENALVON, *his pretended Friend.*
NORVAL, *an aged Peasant.*
DOUGLAS, *supposed his Son.*

WOMEN.

Lady RANDOLPH.
ANNA, *her Confidante.*

Officers, Attendants, &c.

SCENE,—*Lord Randolph's Domains.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Court of a Castle, surrounded with woods.*

Enter Lady RANDOLPH.

Lady R. YE woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom
Accords with my soul's sadness, and draws forth
The voice of sorrow from my bursting heart,
Farewell awhile; I will not leave you long;
For in your shades I deem some spirit dwells,
Who, from the chiding stream, or groaning oak,
Still hears and answers to Matilda's moan.
Oh, Douglas! Douglas! if departed ghosts
Are e'er permitted to review this world,
Within the circle of that wood thou art,
And, with the passion of immortals, hear'st
My lamentation: hear'st thy wretched wife
Weep for her husband slain, her infant lost.
My brother's timeless death I seem to mourn,
Who perished with thee on this fatal day.
To thee I lift my voice; to thee address
The plaint which mortal ear has never heard.
O disregard me not! though I am called
Another's now, my heart is wholly thine.
Incapable of change, affection lies
Buried, my Douglas, in thy bloody grave.—
But Randolph comes, whom fate has made my lord,
To chide my anguish, and defraud the dead.

Enter Lord RANDOLPH.

Lord R. Again these weeds of woe! say, dost thou well
To feed a passion which consumes thy life?
The living claim some duty; vainly thou
Bestow'st thy cares upon the silent dead.

Lady R. Silent, alas! is he for whom I mourn:
Childless, without memorial of his name,
He only now in my remembrance lives.
This fatal day stirs my time-settled sorrow,
Troubles afresh the fountain of my heart.

Lord R. When was it pure of sadness! These black weeds
Express the wonted colour of thy mind,
For ever dark and dismal. Seven long years
Are passed, since we were joined by sacred ties:
Clouds all the while have hung upon thy brow,
Nor broke, nor parted by one gleam of joy.
Time, that wears out the trace of deepest anguish,
As the sea smooths the prints made in the sand,
Has passed o'er thee in vain.

Lady R. If time to come
Should prove as ineffectual, yet, my lord,
Thou can'st not blame me. When our Scottish youth
Vied with each other for my luckless love,
Oft I besought them, I implored them all,
Not to assail me with my father's aid,
Nor blend their better destiny with mine;
For melancholy had congealed my blood,
And froze affection in my chilly breast.
At last my sire, roused with the base attempt
To force me from him, which thou rendered'st vain,
To his own daughter bowed his hoary head,
Besought me to commiserate his age,
And vowed he should not, could not, die in peace,
Unless he saw me wedded, and secured
From violence and outrage. Then, my lord!
In my extreme distress I called on thee,
Thee I bespake, professed my strong desire
To lead a single, solitary life,
And begged thy nobleness, not to demand
Her for a wife, whose heart was dead to love.
How thou persisted'st after this, thou knowest,
And must confess that I am not unjust,
Nor more to thee than to myself injurious.

Lord R. That I confess; yet ever must regret
The grief I cannot cure. Would thou wert not
Composed of grief and tenderness alone,
But had'st a spark of other passions in thee,
Pride, anger, vanity, the strong desire
Of admiration, dear to woman-kind;
These might contend with, and allay thy grief,
As meeting tides and currents smooth our firth.

Lady R. To such a cause the human mind oft owes
Its transient calm; a calm I envy not.

Lord R. Sure thou art not the daughter of Sir Malcolm!
Strong was his rage, eternal his resentment:
For when thy brother fell, he smiled to hear
That Douglas' son in the same field was slain.

Lady R. Oh! rake not up the ashes of my fathers!
Implacable resentment was their crime,
And grievous has the expiation been.
Contending with the Douglas, gallant lives
Of either house were lost; my ancestors
Compelled, at last, to leave their ancient seat
On Tiviot's pleasant banks; and now, of them
No heir is left. Had they not been so stern,
I had not been the last of all my race.

Lord R. Thy grief wrests to its purposes my words.
I never asked of thee that ardent love
Which in the breasts of fancy's children burns.
Decent affection and complacent kindness
Were all I wished for; but I wished in vain.
Hence with the less regret my eyes behold
The storm of war that gathers o'er this land:
If I should perish by the Danish sword,
Matilda would not shed one tear the more.

Lady R. Thou dost not think so: woeful as I am,
I love thy merit, and esteem thy virtues.
But whither goest thou now?

Lord R. Straight to the camp,

Where every warrior on the tip-toe stands
Of expectation, and impatient asks
Each who arrives, if he is come to tell
The Danes are landed.
Lady R. O, may adverse winds
Far from the coast of Scotland drive their fleet:
And every soldier of both hosts return
In peace and safety to his pleasant home!
Lord R. Thou speak'st a woman's, hear a warrior's wish:
Right from their native land, the stormy north,
May the wind blow, till every keel is fixed
Immoveable in Caledonia's strand!
Then shall our foes repent their bold invasion,
And roving armies shun the fatal shore.
Lady R. War I detest: but war with foreign foes,
Whose manners, language, and whose looks are strange,
Is not so horrid, nor to me so hateful,
As that which with our neighbours oft we wage.
A river here, there an ideal line,
By fancy drawn, divide the sister kingdoms.
On each side dwells a people similar,
As twins are, to each other; valiant both;
Both for their valour famous through the world.
Yet will they not unite their kindred arms,
And, if they must have war, wage distant war,
But with each other fight in cruel conflict.
Gallant in strife, and noble in their ire,
The battle is their pastime. They go forth
Gay in the morning, as to summer sport;
When evening comes, the glory of the morn,
The youthful warrior, is a clod of clay.
Thus fall the prime of either hapless land,
And such the fruit of Scotch and English wars!
Lord R. I'll hear no more: this melody would make
A soldier drop his sword, and doff his arms,
Sit down and weep the conquests he has made;
Yea, (like a monk) sing rest and peace in heaven
To souls of warriors in his battles slain.
Lady, farewell: I leave thee not alone;
Yonder comes one whose love makes duty light.
[*Exit.*

Enter ANNA.

Anna. Forgive the rashness of your Anna's love:
Urged by affection, I have thus presumed
To interrupt your solitary thoughts;
And warn you of the hours that you neglect,
And lose in sadness.
Lady R. So to lose my hours
Is all the use I wish to make of time.
Anna. To blame thee, lady, suits not with my state:
But sure I am, since death first preyed on man,
Never did sister thus a brother mourn.
What had your sorrows been if you had lost,
In early youth, the husband of your heart?
Lady R. Oh!
Anna. Have I distressed you with officious love,
And ill-timed mention of your brother's fate?
Forgive me, lady: humble though I am,
The mind I bear partakes not of my fortune:
So fervently I love you, that to dry
Those piteous tears, I'd throw my life away.
Lady R. What power directed thy unconscious tongue
To speak as thou hast done? to name—
Anna. I know not:
But since my words have made my mistress tremble,
I will speak so no more; but silent mix
My tears with hers.
Lady R. No, thou shalt not be silent.
I'll trust thy faithful love, and thou shalt be
Henceforth the instructed partner of my woes.
But what avails it? Can thy feeble pity
Roll back the flood of never-ebbing time?
Compel the earth and ocean to give up
Their dead alive?
Anna. What means my noble mistress?
Lady R. Did'st thou not ask what had my sorrows been,
If I in early youth had lost a husband?—
In the cold bosom of the earth is lodged,
Mangled with wounds, the husband of my youth;
And in some cavern of the ocean lies
My child and his.—
Anna. Oh! lady most revered!
The tale, wrapt up in your amazing words,
Deign to unfold!
Lady R. Alas! an ancient feud,
Hereditary evil, was the source
Of my misfortunes. Ruling fate decreed,
That my brave brother should in battle save
The life of Douglas' son, our house's foe:
The youthful warriors vowed eternal friendship.
To see the vaunted sister of his friend,
Impatient, Douglas to Balermo came,
Under a borrowed name.—My heart he gained;
Nor did I long refuse the hand he begged:
My brother's presence authorized our marriage.
Three weeks, three little weeks, with wings of down,
Had o'er us flown, when my loved lord was called
To fight his father's battles; and with him,
In spite of all my tears, did Malcolm go.
Scarce were they gone, when my stern sire was told
That the false stranger was lord Douglas' son.
Frantic with rage, the baron drew his sword
And questioned me. Alone, forsaken, faint,
Kneeling beneath his sword, faultering I took
An oath equivocal, that I ne'er would
Wed one of Douglas' name. Sincerity!
Thou first of virtues, let no mortal leave
Thy onward path, although the earth should gape,
And from the gulf of hell destruction cry,
To take dissimulation's winding way!
Anna. Alas! how few of woman's fearful kind
Durst own a truth so hardy!
Lady R. The first truth
Is easiest to avow. This moral learn,
This precious moral from my tragic tale.—
In a few days the dreadful tidings came,
That Douglas and my brother both were slain.
My lord! my life! my husband!—mighty God!

What had I done to merit such affliction?
Anna. My dearest lady! many a tale of tears
I've listened to; but never did I hear
A tale so sad as this.
Lady R. In the first days
Of my distracting grief, I found myself—
As women wish to be who love their lords.
But who durst tell my father? The good priest,
Who joined our hands, my brother's ancient tutor,
With his loved Malcolm, in the battle fell:
They two alone were privy to the marriage.
On silence and concealment I resolved,
Till time should make my father's fortune mine.
That very night on which my son was born,
My nurse, the only confidante I had,
Set out with him to reach her sister's house:
But nurse, nor infant, have I ever seen,
Or heard of, Anna, since that fatal hour.
My murdered child!—had thy fond mother feared
The loss of thee, she had loud fame defied,
Despised her father's rage, her father's grief,
And wandered with thee through the scorning world.
Anna. Not seen nor heard of! then perhaps he lives.
Lady R. No. It was dark December; wind and rain
Had beat all night. Across the Carron lay
The destined road; and in its swelling flood
My faithful servant perished with my child.
Oh! hapless son of a most hapless sire!
But they are both at rest; and I, alone,
Dwell in this world of woe, condemned to walk,
Like a guilt-troubled ghost, my painful rounds;
Nor has despiteful fate permitted me
The comfort of a solitary sorrow.
Though dead to love, I was compelled to wed
Randolph, who snatched me from a villain's arms;
And Randolph now possesses the domains,
That by Sir Malcolm's death on me devolved;
Domains, that should to Douglas' son have given
A baron's title and a baron's power.
Such were my soothing thoughts, while I bewailed
The slaughtered father of a son unborn.
And when that son came, like a ray from heaven,
Which shines and disappears—alas, my child!
How long did thy fond mother grasp the hope
Of having thee, she knew not how, restored!
Year after year hath worn her hope away;
But left, still undiminished, her desire.
Anna. The hand, that spins the uneven thread of life,
May smooth the length that's yet to come of yours.
Lady R. Not in this world; I have considered well
Its various evils, and on whom they fall.
Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe!
Oh! had I died when my loved husband fell!
Had some good angel oped to me the book
Of Providence, and let me read my life,
My heart had broke, when I beheld the sum
Of ills, which one by one I have endured.
Anna. That God, whose ministers good angels are,
Hath shut the book, in mercy to mankind.
But we must leave this theme: Glenalvon comes:
I saw him bend on you his thoughtful eyes,
And hitherward he slowly stalks his way.
Lady R. I will avoid him. An ungracious person
Is doubly irksome in an hour like this.
Anna. Why speaks my lady thus of Randolph's heir?
Lady R. Because he's not the heir of Randolph's virtues.
Subtle and shrewd, he offers to mankind
An artificial image of himself:
And he with ease can vary, to the taste
Of different men, its features. Self-denied,
And master of his appetites, he seems:
But his fierce nature, like a fox chained up,
Watches to seize unseen the wished-for prey.
Never were vice and virtue poised so ill,
As in Glenalvon's unrelenting mind.
Yet is he brave and politic in war,
And stands aloft in these unruly times.
Why I describe him thus I'll tell hereafter.
Stay and detain him till I reach the castle.
[*Exit Lady* R.
Anna. Oh happiness! Where art thou to be found?
I see thou dwellest not with birth and beauty,
Though graced with grandeur, and in wealth arrayed:
Nor dost thou, it would seem, with virtue dwell;
Else had this gentle lady missed thee not.

Enter GLENALVON.

Glen. What dost thou muse on, meditating maid?
Like some entranced and visionary seer,
On earth thou stand'st; thy thoughts ascend to Heaven.
Anna. Would that I were, even as thou say'st, a seer,
To have my doubts by heavenly vision cleared!
Glen. What dost thou doubt of? What hast thou to do
With subjects intricate? Thy youth, thy beauty,
Cannot be questioned: Think of these good gifts,
And then thy contemplations will be pleasing.
Anna. Let woman view yon monument of woe,
Then boast of beauty: who so fair as she!
But I must follow; this revolving day
Awakes the memory of her antient woes.
[*Exit* ANNA.
Glen. [*Solus.*] So! Lady Randolph shuns me; by and by
I'll woo her as the lion wooes his brides.
The deed's a doing now, that makes me lord
Of these rich valleys, and a chief of power.
The season is most apt; my sounding steps
Will not be hard amongst the din of arms.
Randolph has lived too long: his better fate
Had the ascendant once, and kept me down:

When I had seized the dame, by chance he came,
Rescued, and had the lady for his labour;
I 'scaped unknown; a slender consolation!
Heaven is my witness that I do not love
To sow in peril, and let others reap
The jocund harvest. Yet I am not safe:
By love, or something like it, stung, inflamed,
Madly I blabbed my passion to his wife,
And she has threatened to acquaint him of it.
The way of woman's will I do not know:
But well I know the baron's wrath is deadly.
I will not live in fear: the man I dread
Is as a Dane to me: ay, and the man
Who stands betwixt me and my chief desire.
No bar but he; she has no kinsman near,
No brother in his sister's quarrel bold;
And for the righteous cause, a stranger's cause,
I know no chief that will defy Glenalvon. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Court, &c.*

Enter servants and a stranger at one door, and LADY RANDOLPH *and* ANNA *at another.*

Lady R. What means this clamour? Stranger, speak secure;
Hast thou been wronged? Have these proud men presumed
To vex the weary traveller on his way?

Ser. By us no stranger ever suffered wrong:
This man with outcry wild has called us forth;
So sore afraid he cannot speak his fears.

Enter Lord RANDOLPH *and a Young Man, with their Swords drawn and bloody.*

Lady R. Nor vain the stranger's fears! how fares my lord?

Lord R. That it fares well, thanks to this gallant youth,
Whose valour saved me from a wretched death!
As down the winding dale I walked alone,
At the cross-way four armed men attacked me;
Rovers, I judge, from the licentious camp;
Who would have quickly laid lord Randolph low,
Had not this brave and generous stranger come,
Like my good angel, in the hour of fate,
And, mocking danger, made my foes his own.
They turned upon him, but his active arm
Struck to the ground, from whence they rose no more,
The fiercest two; the others fled amain,
And left him master of the bloody field.
Speak, lady Randolph; upon beauty's tongue
Dwell accents pleasing to the brave and bold.
Speak, noble dame, and thank him for thy lord.

Lady R. My lord, I cannot speak what now I feel.
My heart o'erflows with gratitude to Heaven,
And to this noble youth, who, all unknown,
To you and yours, deliberated not,
Nor paused at peril, but, humanely brave,
Fought on your side against such fearful odds.
Have you not learned of him, whom we should thank?
Whom call the saviour of lord Randolph's life?

Lord R. I asked that question, and he answered not:
But I must know, who my deliverer is.
[*To the Stranger.*

Stran. A low-born man, of parentage obscure,
Who nought can boast but his desire to be
A soldier, and to gain a name in arms.

Lord R. Whoe'er thou art, thy spirit is ennobled
By the great King of kings! thou art ordained
And stamped a hero, by the sovereign hand
Of nature! blush not, flower of modesty,
As well as valour, to declare thy birth.

Stran. My name is Norval: on the Grampian hills
My father feeds his flocks; a frugal swain,
Whose constant cares were to increase his store,
And keep his only son, myself, at home.
For I had heard of battles, and I longed
To follow to the field some warlike lord:
And Heaven soon granted what my sire denied.
This moon, which rose last night, round as my shield,
Had not yet filled her horns, when, by her light,
A band of fierce barbarians, from the hills,
Rushed, like a torrent, down upon the vale,
Sweeping our flocks and herds. The shepherds fled
For safety and for succour. I alone,
With bended bow, and quiver full of arrows,
Hovered about the enemy, and marked
The road he took; then hastened to my friends,
Whom, with a troop of fifty chosen men,
I met advancing. The pursuit I led,
Till we o'ertook the spoil-encumbered foe.
We fought and conquered. Ere a sword was drawn,
An arrow from my bow had pierced their chief,
Who wore that day the arms which now I wear
Returning home in triumph, I disdained
The shepherd's slothful life; and having heard
That our good king had summoned his bold peers
To lead their warriors to the Carron's side,
I left my father's house, and took with me
A chosen servant to conduct my steps;—
Yon trembling coward, who forsook his master
Journeying with this intent, I passed these tower
And, heaven-directed, came this day to do
The happy deed that gilds my humble name.

Lord R. He is as wise as brave. Was ever tale
With such a gallant modesty rehearsed?
My brave deliverer! thou shalt enter now
A nobler list, and, in a monarch's sight,

Contend with princes for the prize of fame.
I will present thee to the Scottish king,
Whose valiant spirit ever valour loved.
Ah! my Matilda, wherefore starts that tear?

Lady R. I cannot say: for various affections,
And strangely mingled, in my bosom swell;
Yet each of them may well command a tear.
I joy that thou art safe; and I admire
Him and his fortunes, who hath wrought thy safety;
Yea, as my mind predicts, with thine his own.
Obscure and friendless, he the army sought,
Bent upon peril, in the range of death
Resolved to hunt for fame, and with his sword
To gain distinction, which his birth denied.
In this attempt, unknown, he might have perished,
And gained, with all his valour, but oblivion.
Now, graced by thee, his virtues serve no more
Beneath despair. The soldier now of hope,
He stands conspicuous; fame and great renown
Are brought within the compass of his sword.
On this my mind reflected, whilst you spoke,
And blessed the wonder-working lord of heaven.

Lord R. Pious and grateful ever are thy thoughts!
My deeds shall follow where thou point'st the way.
Next to myself, and equal to Glenalvon,
In honour and command shall Norval be.

Nor. I know not how to thank you. Rude I am
In speech and manners: never till this hour
Stood I in such a presence: yet, my lord,
There's something in my breast, which makes me bold
To say, that Norval ne'er will shame thy favour.

Lady R. I will be sworn thou wilt not. Thou shalt be
My knight: and ever, as thou didst to day,
With happy valour guard the life of Randolph.

Lord R. Well hast thou spoke. Let me forbid reply. [*To* NORVAL.
We are thy debtors still. Thy high desert
O'ertops our gratitude. I must proceed,
As was at first intended, to the camp.
Some of my train, I see, are speeding hither,
Impatient, doubtless, of their lord's delay.
Go with me, Norval, and thine eyes shall see
The chosen warriors of thy native land,
Who languish for the fight, and beat the air
With brandished swords.

Nor. Let us begone, my lord.

Lord R. [*To Lady* RANDOLPH.] About the time that the declining sun
Shall his broad orbit o'er yon hills suspend,
Expect us to return. This night once more
Within these walls I rest; my tent I pitch
To-morrow in the field. Prepare the feast.
Free is his heart, who for his country fights:
He, in the eve of battle, may resign
Himself to social pleasure: sweetest then,
When danger to a soldier's soul endears
The human joy, that never may return.
[*Exeunt* RAND. *and* NOR.

Lady R. His parting words have struck a fatal truth.
Oh, Douglas! Douglas! tender was the time
When we two parted, ne'er to meet again!
How many years, of anguish and despair,
Has Heaven annexed to those swift passing hours
Of love and fondness! Then my bosom's flame
Oft, as blown back by the rude breath of fear,
Returned, and with redoubled ardour blazed.

Anna. May gracious Heaven pour the sweet balm of peace
Into the wounds that fester in your breast!
For earthly consolation cannot cure them.

Lady R. One only cure can Heaven itself bestow——
A grave—that bed in which the weary rest.
Wretch that I am! Alas! why am I so?
At every happy parent I repine!
How blest the mother of yon gallant Norval!
She for a living husband bore her pains,
And heard him bless her when a man was born:
She nursed her smiling infant on her breast,
Tended the child, and reared the pleasing boy;
She, with affection's triumph, saw the youth,
In grace and comeliness, surpass his peers:
Whilst I to a dead husband bore a son,
And to the roaring waters gave my child.

Anna. Alas! alas! why will you thus resume
Your grief afresh? I thought that gallant youth
Would, for a while, have won you from your woe.
On him intent you gazed, with a look
Much more delighted, than your pensive eye
Had deigned on other objects to bestow.

Lady R. Delighted, say'st thou? Oh! even there mine eye
Found fuel for my life-consuming sorrow;
I thought, that had the son of Douglas lived,
He might have been like this young gallant stranger,
And paired with him in features and in shape.
In all endowments, as in years, I deem,
My boy with blooming Norval might have numbered.
While thus I mused, a spark from fancy fell
On my sad heart, and kindled up a fondness
For this young stranger, wandering from his home,
And like an orphan cast upon my care.
I will protect thee, said I to myself,
With all my power, and grace with all my favour.

Anna. Sure Heaven will bless so generous a resolve.
You must, my noble dame, exert your power:
You must awake; devices will be framed,
And arrows pointed at the breast of Norval.

Lady R. Glenalvon's false and crafty head will work
Against a rival in his kinsman's love,
If I deter him not; I only can.
Bold as he is, Glenalvon will beware
How he pulls down the fabric that I raise.
I'll be the artist of young Norval's fortune.
'Tis pleasing to admire! most apt was I.

To this affection in my better days;
Though now I seem to you shrunk up, retired
Within the narrow compass of my woe.
Have you not sometimes seen an early flower
Open its bud, and spread its silken leaves,
To catch sweet airs, and odours to bestow;
Then, by the keen blast nipt, pull in its leaves,
And, though still living, die to scent and beauty?
Emblem of me; affliction, like a storm,
Hath killed the forward blossoms of my heart.

Enter GLENALVON.

Glen. Where is my dearest kinsman, noble Randolph?

Lady R. Have you not heard, Glenalvon, of the base—

Glen. I have; and, that the villains may not 'scape,
With a strong band I have begirt the wood.
If they lurk there, alive they shall be taken,
And torture force from them the important secret,
Whether some foe of Randolph hired their swords,
Or if——

Lady R. That care becomes a kinsman's love.
I have a counsel for Glenalvon's ear. [*Exit* ANNA.

Glen. To him your counsels always are commands.

Lady R. I have not found so; thou art known to me.

Glen. Known!

Lady R. And most certain is my cause of knowledge.

Glen. What do you know? By the most blessed cross,
You much amaze me! No created being,
Yourself except, durst thus accost Glenalvon.

Lady R. Is guilt so bold? and dost thou make a merit
Of thy pretended meekness? This to me,
Who, with a gentleness which duty blames,
Have hitherto concealed what, if divulged,
Would make thee nothing; or, what's worse than that,
An outcast beggar, and unpitied too!
For mortals shudder at a crime like thine.

Glen. Thy virtue awes me. First of womankind!
Permit me yet to say, that the fond man,
Whom love transports beyond strict virtue's bounds,
If he is brought by love to misery,
In fortune ruined, as in mind forlorn,
Unpitied cannot be. Pity's the alms
Which on such beggars freely is bestowed;
For mortals know that love is still their lord,
And o'er their vain resolves advances still:
As fire, when kindled by our shepherds, moves
Through the dry heath, before the fanning wind.

Lady R. Reserve these accents for some other ear;
To love's apology I listen not.
Mark thou my words; for it is meet thou shouldst.
His brave deliverer Randolph here retains.
Perhaps his presence may not please thee well;
But, at thy peril, practise aught against him!
Let not thy jealousy attempt to shake
And loosen the good root he has in Randolph;
Whose favourites I know thou hast supplanted.
Thou look'st at me, as if thou fain wouldst pry
Into my heart. 'Tis open as my speech.
I give this early caution, and put on
The curb, before thy temper breaks away.
The friendless stranger my protection claims:
His friend I am, and be not thou his foe. [*Exit.*

Glen. Child that I was, to start at my own shadow,
And be the shallow fool of coward conscience!
I am not what I have been; what I should be.
The darts of destiny have almost pierced
My marble heart. Had I one grain of faith
In holy legends and religious tales,
I should conclude there was an arm above,
That fought against me, and malignant turned,
To catch myself, the subtle snare I set.
Why, rape and murder are not simple means!
The imperfect rape to Randolph gave a spouse,
And the intended murder introduced
A favourite to hide the sun from me;
And, worst of all, a rival. Burning hell!
This were thy centre, if I thought she loved him!
'Tis certain she contemns me; nay, commands me,
And waves the flag of her displeasure o'er me,
In his behalf. And shall I thus be braved?
Curbed, as she calls it, by dame Chastity?
Infernal fiends, if any fiends there are
More fierce than hate, ambition, or revenge,
Rise up, and fill my bosom with your fires,
And policy remorseless! Chance may spoil
A single aim; but perseverance must
Prosper at last. For chance and fate are words;
Persistive wisdom is the fate of man.
Darkly a project peers upon my mind,
Like the red moon when rising in the east,
Crossed and divided by strange-coloured clouds.
I'll seek the slave who came with Norval hither,
And for his cowardice was spurned from him.
I've known a follower's rankled bosom breed
Venom most fatal to his heedless lord. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Court, &c. as before.*

Enter ANNA.

Anna. Thy vassals, grief, great nature's order break,
And change the noon-tide to the midnight hour.
Whilst lady Randolph sleeps, I will walk forth,
And taste the air that breathes on yonder bank.
Sweet may her slumbers be! Ye ministers
Of gracious Heaven, who love the human race,
Angels and seraphs, who delight in goodness,
Forsake your skies, and to her couch descend!
There from her fancy chase those dismal forms,
That haunt her waking; her sad spirit charm
With images celestial, such as please
The blest above upon their golden beds.

Enter Servants.

Ser. One of the vile assassins is secured.
We found the villain lurking in the wood:
With dreadful imprecations he denies
All knowledge of the crime. But this is not
His first essay: these jewels were concealed
In the most secret places of his garment;
Belike the spoils of some that he has murdered.
Anna. Let me look on them. Ha! here is a heart,
The chosen crest of Douglas' valiant name!
These are no vulgar jewels. Guard the wretch.
[*Exit* ANNA.

Enter Servants with a Prisoner.

Pris. I know no more than does the child unborn
Of what you charge me with.
1*st Ser.* You say so, sir!
But torture soon shall make you speak the truth.
Behold, the lady of lord Randolph comes:
Prepare yourself to meet her just revenge.

Enter Lady RANDOLPH *and* ANNA.

Anna. Summon your utmost fortitude, before
You speak with him. Your dignity, your fame,
Are now at stake. Think of the fatal secret,
Which in a moment from your lips may fly.
Lady R. Thou shalt behold me, with a desperate heart,
Hear how my infant perished. See, he kneels.
[*The prisoner kneels.*
Pris. Heaven bless that countenance so sweet and mild!
A judge like thee makes innocence more bold.
Oh, save me, lady, from these cruel men,
Who have attacked and seized me; who accuse
Me of intended murder. As I hope
For mercy at the judgment-seat of Heaven,
The tender lamb, that never nipt the grass,
Is not more innocent than I of murder.
Lady R. Of this man's guilt what proof can ye produce?
1*st Ser.* We found him lurking in the hollow glynn.
When viewed and called upon, amazed he fled.
We overtook him, and enquired from whence
And what he was: he said he came from far,
And was upon his journey to the camp.
Not satisfied with this, we searched his clothes,
And found these jewels, whose rich value plead
Most powerfully against him. Hard he seems,
And old in villainy. Permit us try
His stubbornness against the torture's force.
Pris. Oh, gentle lady! by your lord's dear life,
Which these weak hands, I swear, did ne'er assail;
And by your children's welfare, spare my age!
Let not the iron tear my ancient joints,
And my grey hairs bring to the grave with pain!
Lady R. Account for these; thine own they cannot be:
For these, I say: be stedfast to the truth;
Detected falsehood is most certain death.
[ANNA *removes the servants, and returns.*
Pris. Alas! I'm sore beset! let never man,
For sake of lucre, sin against his soul!
Eternal justice is in this most just!
I, guiltless now, must former guilt reveal.
Lady R. Oh! Anna, hear!—once more I charge thee speak
The truth direct; for these to me foretell
And certify a part of thy narration;
With which, if the remainder tallies not,
An instant and a dreadful death abides thee.
Pris. Then, thus adjured, I'll speak to you as just
As if you were the minister of heaven,
Sent down to search the secret sins of men:—
Some eighteen years ago, I rented land
Of brave Sir Malcolm, then Balarmo's lord;
But falling to decay, his servants seized
All that I had, and then turned me and mine,
(Four helpless infants and their weeping mother)
Out to the mercy of the winter winds.
A little hovel by the river's side
Received us: there hard labour, and the skill
In fishing, which was formerly my sport,
Supported life. Whilst thus we poorly lived,
One stormy night, as I remember well
The wind and rain beat hard upon our roof;
Red came the river down, and loud and oft
The angry spirit of the water shrieked.
At the dead hour of night was heard the cry
Of one in jeopardy. I rose, and ran
To where the circling eddy of a pool,
Beneath the ford, used oft to bring within

My reach, whatever floating thing the stream
Had caught. The voice was ceased; the person lost;
But looking sad and earnest on the waters,
By the moon's light I saw, whirled round and round,
A basket: soon I drew it to the bank,
And nestled curious there an infant lay.
Lady R. Was he alive?
Pris. He was.
Lady R. Inhuman that thou art!
How couldst thou kill what waves and tempests spared?
Pris. I am not so inhuman.
Lady R. Didst thou not?
Anna. My noble mistress, you are moved too much:
This man has not the aspect of stern murder;
Let him go on, and you, I hope, will hear
Good tidings of your kinsman's long-lost child.
Pris. The needy man, who has known better days,
One whom distress has spited at the world,
Is he whom tempting fiends would pitch upon
To do such deeds as make the prosperous men
Lift up their hands, and wonder who could do them.
And such a man was I; a man declined,
Who saw no end of black adversity:
Yet, for the wealth of kingdoms, I would not
Have touched that infant with a hand of harm.
Lady R. Ha! dost thou say so? then perhaps he lives!
Pris. Not many days ago he was alive.
Lady R. O God of Heaven! did he then die so lately?
Pris. I did not say he died; I hope he lives.
Not many days ago these eyes behold
Him, flourishing in youth, and health, and beauty.
Lady R. Where is he now?
Pris. Alas! I know not where.
Lady R. Oh, fate! I fear thee still. Thou riddler, speak
Direct and clear; else I will reach thy soul.
Anna. Permit me, ever honoured! Keen impatience,
Though hard to be restrained, defeats itself.
Pursue thy story with a faithful tongue,
To the last hour that thou didst keep the child.
Pris. Fear not my faith, though I must speak my shame;
Within the cradle where the infant lay,
Was stowed a mighty store of gold and jewels;
Tempted by which, we did resolve to hide
From all the world this wonderful event,
And, like a peasant, breed the noble child.
That none might mark the change of our estate,
We left the country, travelled to the north,
Bought flocks and herds, and gradually brought forth
Our secret wealth. But God's all-seeing eye
Beheld our avarice, and smote us sore.
For one by one all our own children died,
And he, the stranger, sole remained the heir
Of what indeed was his. Fain then would I,
Who with a father's fondness lov'd the boy,
Have trusted him, now in the dawn of youth,
With his own secret: but my anxious wife,
Foreboding evil, never would consent.
Meanwhile the stripling grew in years and beauty;
And, as we oft observed, he bore himself,
Not as the offspring of our cottage blood;
For nature will break out: mild with the mild,
But with the froward he was fierce as fire,
And night and day he talked of war and arms.
I set myself against his warlike bent;
But all in vain; for when a desperate band
Of robbers from the savage mountains came—
Lady R. Eternal providence! What is thy name?
Pris. My name is Norval; and my name he bears.
Lady R. 'Tis he! 'tis he himself! It is my son!
Oh, sovereign mercy! 'Twas my child I saw!
No wonder, Anna, that my bosom burned.
Anna. Just are your transports: ne'er was woman's heart
Proved with such fierce extremes, high-fated dame!
But yet remember that you are beheld
By servile eyes; your gestures may be seen
Impassioned, strange; perhaps your words o'erheard.
Lady R. Well dost thou counsel, Anna: heaven bestow
On me that wisdom which my state requires!
Anna. The moments of deliberation pass,
And soon you must resolve. This useful man
Must be dismissed in safety, ere my lord
Shall, with his brave deliverer, return.
Pris. If I, amidst astonishment and fear,
Have of your words and gestures rightly judged,
Thou art the daughter of my ancient master;
The child I rescued from the flood is thine.
Lady R. With thee dissimulation now were vain;
I am indeed the daughter of Sir Malcolm;
The child thou rescued from the flood is mine.
Pris. Blest be the hour that made me a poor man!
My poverty has saved my master's house!
Lady R. Thy words surprise me: sure thou dost not feign!
The tear stands in thine eye; such love from thee
Sir Malcolm's house deserve not, if aright
Thou told'st the story of thy own distress.
Pris. Sir Malcolm of our barons was the flower;
The fastest friend, the best, the kindest master.
But ah! he knew not of my sad estate.
After that battle, where his gallant son,
Your own brave brother, fell, the good old lord
Grew desperate and reckless of the world;
And never, as he erst was wont, went forth
To overlook the conduct of his servants.
By them I was thrust out, and them I blame:
May Heaven so judge me as I judge my master!
And God so love me as I love his race!

Lady R. His race shall yet reward thee.—
On thy faith
Depends the fate of thy lov'd master's house.
Rememb'rest thou a little lonely hut,
That like a holy hermitage appears
Among the cliffs of Carron?
Pris. I remember the cottage of the cliffs.
Lady R. 'Tis that I mean:
There dwells a man of venerable age,
Who in my father's service spent his youth:
Tell him I sent thee, and with him remain,
Till I shall call upon thee to declare,
Before the king and nobles, what thou now
To me hast told. No more but this, and thou
Shalt live in honour all thy future days;
Thy son so long shall call thee father still,
And all the land shall bless the man, who saved
The son of Douglas, and Sir Malcolm's heir.
Remember well my words; if thou should'st meet
Him whom thou call'st thy son, still call him so;
And mention nothing of his nobler father.
Pris. Fear not that I shall mar so fair an harvest,
By putting in my sickle ere 'tis ripe.
Why did I leave my home and ancient dame?
To find the youth, to tell him all I know,
And make him wear these jewels on his arms,
Which might, I thought, be challenged, and so bring
To light the secret of his noble birth.
[LADY RANDOLPH *goes towards the Servants.*
Lady R. This man is not the assassin you suspected,
Though chance combined some likelihoods against him.
He is the faithful bearer of the jewels
To their right owner, whom in haste he seeks.
'Tis meet that you should put him on his way,
Since your mistaken zeal hath dragged him hither. [*Exeunt Stranger and Servants.*
My faithful Anna! dost thou share my joy?
I know thou dost. Unparallelled event!
Reaching from Heaven to earth, Jehovah's arm
Snatched from the waves, and brings to me my son!
Judge of the widow, and the orphan's father,
Accept a widow's and a mother's thanks
For such a gift! What does my Anna think
Of the young eaglet of a valiant nest?
How soon he gaz'd on bright and burning arms,
Spurned the low dunghill where his fate had thrown him,
And towered up to the region of his sire!
Anna. How fondly did your eyes devour the boy!
Mysterious nature, with the unseen cord
Of powerful instinct, drew you to your own.
Lady R. The ready story of his birth believed
Suppress my fancy quite; nor did he owe
To any likeness my so sudden favour:
But now I long to see his face again,
Examine every feature, and find out
The lineaments of Douglas, or my own.
But most of all I long to let him know
Who his true parents are, to clasp his neck,
And tell him all the story of his father.
Anna. With wary caution you must bear yourself
In public, lest your tenderness break forth,
And in observers stir conjectures strange.
For, if a cherub in the shape of woman
Should walk this world, yet defamation would,
Like a vile cur, bark at the angel's train.
To-day the baron started at your tears.
Lady R. He did so, Anna! well thy mistress knows
If the least circumstance, mote of offence,
Should touch the baron's eye, his sight would be
With jealousy disordered. But the more
It does behove me instant to declare
The birth of Douglas, and assert his rights.
This night I purpose with my son to meet,
Reveal the secret, and consult with him:
For wise he is, or my fond judgment errs.
As he does now, so looked his noble father,
Arrayed in Nature's ease: his mien, his speech,
Were sweetly simple, and full oft deceived
Those trivial mortals who seem always wise.
But, when the matter matched his mighty mind,
Up rose the hero; on his piercing eye
Sat observation; on each glance of thought
Decision followed, as the thunderbolt
Pursues the flash.
Anna. That demon haunts you still:
Behold Glenalvon.
Lady R. Now I shun him not.
This day I braved him in behalf of Norval:
Perhaps too far: at least my nicer fears
For Douglas thus interpret.

Enter GLENALVON.

Glen. Noble dame!
The hovering Dane, at last, his men hath landed:
No band of pirates; but a mighty host,
That come to settle where their valour conquers:
To win a country, or to lose themselves.
Lady R. But whence comes this intelligence, Glenalvon?
Glen. A nimble courier, sent from yonder camp,
To hasten up the chieftains of the north,
Informed me, as he passed, that the fierce Dane
Had on the eastern coast of Lothian landed,
Near to that place where the sea-rock immense,
Amazing Bass, looks o'er a fertile land.
Lady R. Then must this western army march to join
The warlike troops that guard Edina's towers?
Glen. Beyond all question. If impairing time
Has not effaced the image of a place,
Once perfect in my breast, there is a wild
Which lies to westward of that mighty rock,
And seems by nature formed for the camp
Of water-wafted armies, whose chief strength
Lies in firm foot, unflanked with warlike horse:
If martial skill directs the Danish lords,
There inaccessible their army lies
To our swift-scouring horse; the bloody field
Must man to man, and foot to foot be fought.

Lady R. How many mothers shall bewail their sons!
How many widows weep their husbands slain!
Ye dames of Denmark, even for you I feel,
Who, sadly sitting on the sea-beat shore,
Long look for lords that never shall return.
Glen. Oft has the unconquered Caledonian sword
Widowed the north. The children of the slain
Come, as I hope, to meet their fathers' fate.
The monster War, with her infernal brood,
Loud-yelling fury and life-ending pain,
Are objects suited to Glenalvon's soul.
Scorn is more grievous than the pains of death;
Reproach more piercing than the pointed sword.
Lady R. I scorn thee not but when I ought to scorn;
Nor e'er reproach, but when insulted virtue
Against audacious vice asserts herself.
I own thy worth, Glenalvon; none more apt
Than I to praise thine eminence in arms,
And be the echo of thy martial fame.
No longer vainly feed a guilty passion:
Go and pursue a lawful mistress, Glory.
Upon the Danish crests redeem thy fault,
And let thy valour be the shield of Randolph.
Glen. One instant stay, and hear an altered man.
When beauty pleads for virtue, vice, abashed,
Flies its own colours, and goes o'er to virtue.
I am your convert; time will shew how truly:
Yet one immediate proof I mean to give.
That youth, for whom your ardent zeal, to-day,
Somewhat too haughtily defied your slave,
Amidst the shock of armies I'll defend,
And turn death from him, with a guardian's arm.
Sedate by use, my bosom maddens not
At the tumultuous uproar of the field.
Lady R. Act thus, Glenalvon, and I am thy friend;
But that's thy least reward. Believe me, sir,
The truly generous is the truly wise;
And he, who loves not others, lives unblest.
[*Exit Lady* RANDOLPH.
Glen. [*solus*] Amen! and virtue is its own reward!
I think that I have hit the very tone
In which she loves to speak. Honeyed assent,
How pleasant art thou to the taste of man,
And woman also! flattery direct
Rarely disgusts. They little know mankind
Who doubt its operation: 'tis my key,
And opes the wicket of the human heart.
How far I have succeeded now I know not.
Yet I incline to think her stormy virtue
Is lulled awhile: 'tis her alone I fear;
Whilst she and Randolph live, and live in faith
And amity, uncertain is my tenure.
Fate o'er my head suspends disgrace and death,
By that weak hair, a peevish female's will.
I am not idle; but the ebbs and flows
Of fortune's tide cannot be calculated.
That slave of Norval's I have found most apt:
I shewed him gold, and he has pawned his soul
To say and swear whatever I suggest.
Norval, I'm told, has that alluring look,
'Twixt man and woman, which I have observed
To charm the nicer and fantastic dames,
Who are, like lady Randolph, full of virtue.
In raising Randolph's jealousy, I may
But point him to the truth. He seldom errs,
Who thinks the worst he can of womankind.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Flourish of Trumpets.*

Enter Lord RANDOLPH *attended.*

Lord R. Summon an hundred horse, by break of day,
To wait our pleasure at the castle gate.

Enter Lady RANDOLPH.

Lady R. Alas, my lord! I've heard unwelcome news;
The Danes are landed.
Lord R. Ay; no inroad this
Of the Northumbrian, bent to take a spoil:
No sportive war, no tournament essay
Of some young knight resolved to break a spear,
And stain with hostile blood his maiden arms.
The Danes are landed: we must beat them back,
Or live the slaves of Denmark.
Lady R. Dreadful times!
Lord R. The fenceless villages are all forsaken;
The trembling mothers and their children lodged
In wall-girt towers and castles; whilst the men
Retire indignant. Yet, like broken waves,
They but retire more awful to return.
Lady R. Immense, as fame reports, the Danish host!
Lord R. Were it as numerous as loud fame reports,
An army knit like ours would pierce it through:
Brothers, that shrink not from each other's side,
And fond companions, fill our warlike files:
For his dear offspring, and the wife he loves,
The husband and the fearless father arm.
In vulgar breasts heroic ardour burns,
And the poor peasant mates his dying lord.
Lady R. Men's minds are tempered, like their swords, for war;
Lovers of danger, on destruction's brink
They joy to rear erect their daring forms.
Hence, early graves; hence, the lone widow's life;
And the sad mother's grief-embittered age.
Where is our gallant guest?
Lord R. Down in the vale

I left him, managing a fiery steed,
Whose stubbornness had foiled the strength and skill
Of every rider. But behold he comes,
In earnest conversation with Glenalvon.

Enter NORVAL *and* GLENALVON.

Glenalvon! with the lark arise; go forth,
And lead my troops that lie in yonder vale:
Private I travel to the royal camp.
Norval, thou goest with me. But say, young man!
Where didst thou learn so to discourse of war,
And in such terms, as I o'erheard to-day?
War is no village science, nor its phrase
A language taught amongst the shepherd swains.
Nor. Small is the skill my lord delights to praise
In him he favours. Hear from whence it came.
Beneath a mountain's brow, the most remote
And inaccessible by shepherds trod,
In a deep cave, dug by no mortal hand,
A hermit lived: a melancholy man,
Who was the wonder of our wandering swains.
Austere and lonely, cruel to himself,
Did they report him: the cold earth his bed,
Water his drink, his food the shepherds' alms.
I went to see him, and my heart was touched
With reverence and with pity. Mild he spake,
And, entering on discourse, such stories told,
As made me oft revisit his sad cell.
For he had been a soldier in his youth;
And fought in famous battles, when the peers
Of Europe, by the bold Godfredo led,
Against the usurping infidel displayed
The blessed cross, and won the Holy Land.
Pleased with my admiration, and the fire
His speech struck from me, the old man would shake
His years away, and act his young encounters:
Then, having shewed his wounds, he would sit him down,
And all the live-long day discourse of war.
To help my fancy, in the smooth green turf
He cut the figures of the marshalled hosts;
Described the motions, and explained the use,
Of the deep column, and the lengthened line,
The square, the crescent, and the phalanx firm.
For all that Saracen or Christian knew
Of war's vast art, was to this hermit known.
Lord R. Why did this soldier in a desert hide
Those qualities, that should have graced a camp?
Nor. That too at last I learned. Unhappy man!
Returning homeward by Messina's port,
Loaded with wealth and honours bravely won,
A rude and boisterous captain of the sea
Fastened a quarrel on him. Fierce they fought;
The stranger fell, and, with his dying breath,
Declared his name and lineage. Mighty power!
The soldier cried, my brother! Oh, my brother!
Lady R. His brother!
Nor. Yes; of the same parents born;
His only brother. They exchanged forgiveness:
And happy, in my mind, was he that died;
For many deaths has the survivor suffered.
In the wild desert on a rock he sits,
Or on some nameless stream's untrodden banks,
And ruminates all day his dreadful fate.
At times, alas! not in his perfect mind,
Holds dialogues with his lov'd brother's ghost;
And oft each night forsakes his sullen couch,
To make sad orisons for him he slew.
Lady R. To what mysterious woes are mortals born!
In this dire tragedy were there no more
Unhappy persons? Did the parents live?
Nor. No, they were dead; kind Heaven had closed their eyes,
Before their son had shed his brother's blood.
Lord R. Hard is his fate; for he was not to blame.
There is a destiny in this strange world,
Which oft decrees an undeserved doom;
Let schoolmen tell us why.—From whence these sounds? [*Trumpets at a distance.*

Enter an Officer.

Offi. My lord, the trumpets of the troops of Lorn:
Their valiant leader hails the noble Randolph.
Lord R. Mine ancient guest! Does he the warriors lead?
Has Denmark roused the brave old knight to arms?
Offi. No; worn with warfare, he resigns the sword.
His eldest hope, the valiant John of Lorn,
Now leads his kindred bands.
Lord R. Glenalvon, go.
With hospitality's most strong request
Entreat the chief. [*Exit* GLENALVON.
Offi. My lord, requests are vain.
He urges on, impatient of delay,
Stung with the tidings of the foe's approach.
Lord R. May victory sit upon the warrior's plume!
Bravest of men! his flocks and herds are safe;
Remote from war's alarms his pastures lie,
By mountains inaccessible secured:
Yet foremost he into the plain descends,
Eager to bleed in battles not his own.
Such were the heroes of the ancient world;
Contemners they of indolence and gain;
But still for love of glory and of arms,
Prone to encounter peril, and to lift,
Against each strong antagonist, the spear.
I'll go and press the hero to my breast.
[*Exit with the Officer.*
Lady R. The soldier's loftiness, the pride and pomp
Investing awful war, Norval, I see,
Transport thy youthful mind.
Nor. Ah! should they not?
Blessed be the hour I left my father's house!
I might have been a shepherd all my days,
And stole obscurely to a peasant's grave.
Now, if I live, with mighty chiefs I stand;

And, if I fall, with noble dust I lie.
Lady R. There is a generous spirit in thy breast,
That could have well sustained a prouder fortune.
This way with me; under yon spreading beech,
Unseen, unheard, by human eye or ear,
I will amaze thee with a wond'rous tale.
Nor. Let there be danger, lady, with the secret,
That I may hug it to my grateful heart,
And prove my faith. Command my sword, my life:
These are the sole possessions of poor Norval.
Lady R. Know'st thou these gems?
Nor. Durst I believe mine eyes,
I'd say I knew them, and they were my father's.
Lady R. Thy father's, say'st thou! Ah, they were thy father's!
Nor. I saw them once, and curiously enquired
Of both my parents, whence such splendour came?
But I was checked, and more could never learn.
Lady R. Then learn of me, thou art not Norval's son.
Nor. Not Norval's son!
Lady R. Nor of a shepherd sprung.
Nor. Lady, whom am I then?
Lady R. Noble thou art;
For noble was thy sire.
Nor. I will believe—
Oh, tell me farther! Say, who was my father?
Lady R. Douglas!
Nor. Lord Douglas, whom to-day I saw?
Lady R. His younger brother.
Nor. And in yonder camp?
Lady R. Alas!
Nor. You make me tremble—Sighs and tears!
Lives my brave father?
Lady R. Ah! too brave, indeed!
He fell in battle ere thyself was born.
Nor. Ah me, unhappy! Ere I saw the light!
But does my mother live? I may conclude,
From my own fate, her portion has been sorrow.
Lady R. She lives; but wastes her life in constant woe,
Weeping her husband slain, her infant lost.
Nor. You, that are skilled so well in the sad story
Of my unhappy parents, and with tears
Bewail their destiny, now have compassion
Upon the offspring of the friends you loved.
Oh, tell me who, and where, my mother is!
Oppressed by a base world, perhaps she bends
Beneath the weight of other ills than grief;
And, desolate, implores of Heaven the aid
Her son should give. It is, it must be so——
Your countenance confesses that she's wretched.
Oh, tell me her condition! Can the sword——
Who shall resist me in a parent's cause?
Lady R. Thy virtue ends her woes——My son! my son!
I am thy mother, and the wife of Douglas!
[*Falls upon his neck.*
Nor. Oh, heaven and earth! how wond'rous is my fate!
Art thou my mother? Ever let me kneel!
Lady R. Image of Douglas! fruit of fatal love!
All that I owe thy sire, I pay to thee.
Nor. Respect and admiration still possess me,
Checking the love and fondness of a son:
Yet I was filial to my humble parents.
But did my sire surpass the rest of men,
As thou excellest all of womankind?
Lady R. Arise, my son. In me thou dost behold
The poor remains of beauty once admired.
The autumn of my days is come already,
For sorrow made my summer haste away;
Yet in my prime I equalled not thy father:
His eyes were like the eagle's, yet sometimes
Liker the dove's; and, as he pleased, he won
All hearts with softness, or with spirit awed.
Nor. How did he fall? Sure 'twas a bloody field
When Douglas died. O, I have much to ask!
Lady R. Hereafter thou shalt hear the lengthened tale
Of all thy father's and thy mother's woes.
At present this—Thou art the rightful heir
Of yonder castle, and the wide domains,
Which now lord Randolph, as my husband, holds.
But thou shalt not be wronged; I have the power
To right thee still. Before the king I'll kneel,
And call lord Douglas to protect his blood.
Nor. The blood of Douglas will protect itself.
Lady R. But we shall need both friends and favour, boy,
To wrest thy lands and lordship from the gripe
Of Randolph and his kinsman. Yet I think
My tale will move each gentle heart to pity,
My life incline the virtuous to believe.
Nor. To be the son of Douglas is to me
Inheritance enough. Declare my birth,
And in the field I'll seek for fame and fortune.
Lady R. Thou dost not know what perils and injustice
Await the poor man's valour. Oh, my son!
The noblest blood of all the land's abashed,
Having no lacquey but pale poverty.
Too long hast thou been thus attended, Douglas,
Too long hast thou been deemed a peasant's child.
The wanton heir of some inglorious chief,
Perhaps, has scorned thee in the youthful sports,
Whilst thy indignant spirit swelled in vain.
Such contumely thou no more shalt bear:
But how I purpose to redress thy wrongs
Must be hereafter told. Prudence directs
That we should part before yon chiefs return.
Retire, and from thy rustic follower's hand
Receive a billet, which thy mother's care,
Anxious to see thee, dictated before
This casual opportunity arose
Of private conference. Its purport mark;
For, as I there appoint, we meet again.
Leave me, my son; and frame thy manners still
To Norval's, not to noble Douglas' state.

Nor. I will remember. Where is Norval now?
That good old man.
Lady R. At hand concealed he lies,
An useful witness. But beware, my son,
Of yon Glenalvon; in his guilty breast
Resides a villain's shrewdness, ever prone
To false conjecture. He hath grieved my heart.
Nor. Has he, indeed? Then let yon false Glenalvon
Beware of me! [*Exit.*
Lady R. There burst the smothered flame.
Oh, thou all-righteous and eternal King!
Who Father of the fatherless art called,
Protect my son! Thy inspiration, Lord!
Hath filled his bosom with that secret fire,
Which in the breasts of his forefathers burned!
Set him on high, like them, that he may shine
The star and glory of his native land!
Then let the minister of death descend,
And bear my willing spirit to its place.
Yonder they come. How do bad women find
Unchanging aspects to conceal their guilt,
When I, by reason and by justice urged,
Full hardly can dissemble with these men,
In nature's pious cause?

Enter Lord RANDOLPH *and* GLENALVON.

Lord R. Yon gallant chief,
Of arms enamoured, all repose disclaims.
Lady R. Be not, my lord, by his example swayed.
Arrange the business of to-morrow now,
And when you enter, speak of war no more.
[*Exit.*
Lord R. 'Tis so, by Heaven! her mien, her voice, her eye,
And her impatience to be gone, confirm it.
Glen. He parted from her now. Behind the mount,
Amongst the trees, I saw him glide along.
Lord R. For sad sequestered virtue she's renowned.
Glen. Most true, my lord,
Lord R. Yet this distinguished dame
Invites a youth, the acquaintance of a day,
Alone to meet her at the midnight hour.
This assignation, [*Shews a letter.*] the assassin freed,
Her manifest affection for the youth,
Might breed suspicion in a husband's brain,
Whose gentle consort all for love had wedded:
Much more in mine. Matilda never loved me.
Let no man, after me, a woman wed,
Whose heart he knows he has not: though she brings
A mine of gold, a kingdom for her dowry.
For let her seem, like the night's shadowy queen,
Cold and contemplative—he cannot trust her:
She may, she will, bring shame and sorrow on him:
The worst of sorrows, and the worst of shames!
Glen. Yield not, my lord, to such afflicting thoughts;
But let the spirit of an husband sleep,
Till your own senses make a sure conclusion.
This billet must to blooming Norval go:
At the next turn awaits my trusty spy;
I'll give it him refitted for his master.
In the close thicket take your secret stand;
The moon shines bright, and your own eyes may judge
Of their behaviour.
Lord R. Thou dost counsel well.
Glen. Permit me now to make one slight essay.
Of all the trophies which vain mortals boast,
By wit, by valour, or by wisdom won,
The first and fairest, in a young man's eye,
Is woman's captive heart. Successful love
With glorious fumes intoxicates the mind,
And the proud conqueror in triumph moves,
Air-born, exalted above vulgar men.
Lord R. And what avails this maxim?
Glen. Much, my lord.
Withdraw a little; I'll accost young Norval,
And with ironical derisive counsel
Explore his spirit. If he is no more
Than humble Norval, by thy favour raised,
Brave as he is, he'll shrink astonished from me:
But if he be the favourite of the fair,
Loved by the first of Caledonia's dames,
He'll turn upon me, as the lion turns
Upon the hunter's spear.
Lord R. 'Tis shrewdly thought.
Glen. When we grow loud, draw near. But let my lord
His rising wrath restrain. [*Exit* RANDOLPH.
'Tis strange, by Heaven!
That she should run, full tilt, her fond career
To one so little known. She, too, that seemed
Pure as the winter stream, when ice, embossed,
Whitens its course. Even I did think her chaste,
Whose charity exceeds not. Precious sex!
Whose deeds lascivious pass Glenalvon's thoughts!

Enter NORVAL.

His port I love; he's in a proper mood
To chide the thunder, if at him it roared. [*Aside.*
Has Norval seen the troops?
Nor. The setting sun,
With yellow radiance, lightened all the vale;
And, as the warriors moved, each polished helm,
Corslet, or spear, glanced back his gilded beams.
The hill they climbed, and, halting at its top,
Of more than mortal size, towering, they seemed
An host angelic, clad in burning arms.
Glen. Thou talk'st it well; no leader of our host,
In sounds more lofty, speaks of glorious war.
Nor. If I shall e'er acquire a leader's name,
My speech will be less ardent. Novelty
Now prompts my tongue, and youthful admiration
Vents itself freely; since no part is mine
Of praise pertaining to the great in arms.
Glen. You wrong yourself, brave sir; your martial deeds
Have ranked you with the great. But mark me, Norval;

Lord Randolph's favour now exalts your youth
Above his veterans of famous service.
Let me, who know these soldiers, counsel you.
Give them all honour; seem not to command;
Else they will scarcely brook your late sprung power,
Which nor alliance props, nor birth adorns.
Nor. Sir, I have been accustomed all my days
To hear and speak the plain and simple truth:
And though I have been told that there are men,
Who borrow friendship's tongue to speak their scorn,
Yet in such language I am little skilled.
Therefore, I thank Glenalvon for his counsel,
Although it sounded harshly. Why remind
Me of my birth obscure? Why slur my power
With such contemptuous terms?
Glen. I did not mean
To gall your pride, which now I see is great.
Nor. My pride!
Glen. Suppress it, as you wish to prosper.
Your pride's excessive. Yet, for Randolph's sake,
I will not leave you to its rash direction.
If thus you swell, and frown at high-born men,
Will high-born men endure a shepherd's scorn?
Nor. A shepherd's scorn!
Glen. Yes; if you presume
To bend on soldiers these disdainful eyes,
What will become of you!
Nor. If this were told!— [*Aside.*
Hast thou no fears for thy presumptuous self?
Glen. Ha! dost thou threaten me?
Nor. Didst thou not hear?
Glen. Unwillingly I did; a nobler foe
Had not been questioned thus. But such as thee——
Nor. Whom dost thou think me?
Glen. Norval.
Nor. So I am——
And who is Norval in Glenalvon's eyes?
Glen. A peasant's son, a wandering beggar-boy;
At best no more, even if he speaks the truth.
Nor. False as thou art, dost thou suspect my truth?
Glen. Thy truth! thou'rt all a lie: and false as hell
Is the vain-glorious tale thou toldst to Randolph.
Nor. If I were chained, unarmed, and bed-rid old,
Perhaps I should revile; but as I am,
I have no tongue to rail. The humble Norval
Is of a race who strive not but with deeds.
Did I not fear to freeze thy shallow valour,
And make thee sink too soon beneath my sword,
I'd tell thee—what thou art. I know thee well.
Glen. Dost thou not know Glenalvon, born to command
Ten thousand slaves like thee——
Nor. Villain, no more!
Draw and defend thy life. I did design
To have defied thee in another cause:
But heaven accelerates its vengeance on thee.
Now for my own and lady Randolph's wrongs!

Enter Lord RANDOLPH.

Lord R. Hold, I command you both. The man that stirs
Makes me his foe,
Nor. Another voice than thine
That threat had vainly sounded, noble Randolph.
Glen. Hear him, my lord; he's wond'rous condescending!
Mark the humility of shepherd Norval!
Nor. Now you may scoff in safety.
[*Sheathes his sword.*
Lord R. Speak not thus,
Taunting each other; but unfold to me
The cause of quarrel; then I judge betwixt you.
Nor. Nay, my good lord! though I revere you much,
My cause I plead not, nor demand your judgment.
I blush to speak! I will not, cannot speak
The opprobrious words that I from him have borne.
To the liege-lord of my dear native land
I owe a subject's homage: but even him
And his high arbitration I'd reject.
Within my bosom reigns another lord;
Honour, sole judge, and umpire of itself.
If my free speech offend you, noble Randolph,
Revoke your favours, and let Norval go
Hence as he came, alone, but not dishonoured.
Lord R. Thus far I'll mediate with impartial voice:
The ancient foe of Caledonia's land
Now waves his banners o'er her frighted fields.
Suspend your purpose till your country's arms
Repel the bold invader: then decide
The private quarrel.
Glen. I agree to this.
Nor. And I.

Enter Servant.

Ser. The banquet waits.
Lord R. We come. [*Exit Servant.*
Glen. Norval,
Let not our variance mar the social hour,
Nor wrong the hospitality of Randolph.
Nor frowning anger, nor yet wrinkled hate,
Shall stain my countenance. Smooth thou thy brow;
Nor let our strife disturb the gentle dame.
Nor. Think not so lightly, sir, of my resentment.
When we contend again, our strife is mortal.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Grove.*

Enter DOUGLAS.

Doug. This is the place, the centre of the grove;
Here stands the oak, the monarch of the wood.
How sweet and solemn is this midnight scene!
The silver moon, unclouded, holds her way
Through skies where I could count each little star.
The fanning west wind scarcely stirs the leaves;
The river, rushing o'er its pebbled bed,
Imposes silence with a stilly sound.
In such a place as this, at such an hour,
If ancestry can be in aught believed,
Descending spirits have conversed with man,
And told the secrets of the world unknown.

Enter Old NORVAL.

Old Nor. 'Tis he. But what if he should chide me hence?
His just reproach I fear.
[DOUG. *turns aside, and sees him.*
Forgive! forgive!
Canst thou forgive the man, the selfish man,
Who bred sir Malcolm's heir a shepherd's son?
Doug. Kneel not to me; thou art my father still:
Thy wished-for presence now completes my joy.
Welcome to me; my fortunes thou shalt share,
And ever honoured with thy Douglas live.
Old Nor. And dost thou call me father? Oh, my son!
I think that I could die to make amends
For the great wrong I did thee. 'Twas my crime
Which in the wilderness so long concealed
The blossom of thy youth.
Doug. Not worse the fruit,
That in the wilderness the blossom blowed.
Amongst the shepherds, in the humble cot,
I learned some lessons, which I'll not forget
When I inhabit yonder lofty towers.
I, who was once a swain, will ever prove
The poor man's friend; and when my vassals bow,
Norval shall smooth the crested pride of Douglas.
Old Nor. Let me but live to see thine exaltation!
Yet grievous are my fears. Oh, leave this place
And those unfriendly towers!
Doug. Why should I leave them?
Old Nor. Lord Randolph and his kinsman seek your life.
Doug. How know'st thou that?
Old Nor. I will inform you how:
When evening came, I left the secret place
Appointed for me by your mother's care,
And fondly trod in each accustomed path
That to the castle leads. Whilst thus I ranged,
I was alarmed with unexpected sounds
Of earnest voices. On the persons came.
Unseen I lurked, and overheard them name
Each other as they talked; lord Randolph this,
And that Glenalvon. Still of you they spoke,
And of the lady; threatening was their speech,
Though but imperfectly my ear could hear it.
'Twas strange, they said, a wonderful discovery,
And ever and anon they vowed revenge.
Doug. Revenge! for what?
Old Nor. For being what you are,
Sir Malcolm's heir: how else have you offended?
When they were gone, I hied me to my cottage,
And there sat musing how I best might find
Means to inform you of their wicked purpose;
But I could think of none. At last, perplexed,
I issued forth, encompassing the tower,
With many a wearied step, and wishful look.
Now Providence hath brought you to my sight,
Let not your too courageous spirit scorn
The caution which I give.
Doug. I scorn it not.
My mother warned me of Glenalvon's baseness;
But I will not suspect the noble Randolph.
In our encounter with the vile assassins,
I marked his brave demeanour; him I'll trust.
Old Nor. I fear you will too far.
Doug. Here in this place
I wait my mother's coming: she shall know
What thou hast told: her counsel I will follow,
And cautious ever are a mother's counsels.
You must depart: your presence may prevent
Our interview.
Old Nor. My blessing rest upon thee!
Oh, may heaven's hand, which saved thee from the wave,
And from the sword of foes, be near thee still;
Turning mischance, if aught hangs o'er thy head,
All upon mine! [*Exit.*
Doug. He loves me like a parent;
And must not, shall not, lose the son he loves,
Although his son has found a nobler father.
Eventful day! How hast thou changed my state!
Once on the cold and winter-shaded side
Of a bleak hill mischance had rooted me,
Never to thrive, child of another soil.
Transplanted now to the gay sunny vale,
Like the green thorn of May my fortune flowers.
Ye glorious stars! high Heaven's resplendent host!
To whom I oft have of my lot complained,
Hear and record my soul's unaltered wish!
Dead or alive, let me but be renowned!
May heaven inspire some fierce gigantic Dane
To give a bold defiance to our host!
Before he speaks it out I will accept;
Like Douglas conquer, or like Douglas die.

Enter Lady RANDOLPH.

Lady R. My son! I heard a voice——
Doug. The voice was mine.
Lady R. Didst thou complain aloud to Nature's ear,
That thus in dusky shades, at midnight hours,
By stealth the mother and the son should meet?
[*Embracing him.*
Doug. No; on this happy day, this better birth-day,
My thoughts and words are all of hope and joy.
Lady R. Sad fear and melancholy still divide
The empire of my breast with hope and joy.
Now hear what I devise——
Doug. First, let me tell
What may the tenor of your counsel change.
Lady R. My heart forebodes some evil.
Doug. 'Tis not good——
At eve, unseen by Randolph and Glenalvon,
The good old Norval in the grove o'erheard
Their conversation; oft they mentioned me,
With dreadful threatenings; you they sometimes named.
'Twas strange, they said, a wonderful discovery;
And ever and anon they vowed revenge.
Lady R. Defend us, gracious God! we are betrayed:
They have found out the secret of thy birth:
It must be so. That is the great discovery.
Sir Malcolm's heir is come to claim his own,
And they will be revenged. Perhaps even now,
Armed and prepared for murder, they but wait
A darker and more silent hour to break
Into the chamber where they think thou sleep'st.
This moment, this, Heaven hath ordained to save thee!
Fly to the camp, my son!
Doug. And leave you here?
No: to the castle let us go together.
Call up the ancient servants of your house,
Who in their youth did eat your father's bread.
Then tell them loudly that I am your son.
If in the breasts of men one spark remains
Of sacred love, fidelity, or pity,
Some in your cause will arm. I ask but few
To drive those spoilers from my father's house.
Lady R. Oh, Nature, Nature! what can check thy force?
Thou genuine offspring of the daring Douglas!
But rush not on destruction: save thyself,
And I am safe. To me they mean no harm.
Thy stay but risks thy precious life in vain.
That winding path conducts thee to the river.
Cross where thou seest a broad and beaten way,
Which, running eastward, leads thee to the camp.
Instant demand admittance to lord Douglas;
Shew him these jewels which his brother wore.
Thy look, thy voice, will make him feel the truth,
Which I, by certain proof, will soon confirm.
Doug. I yield me, and obey: but yet my heart
Bleeds at this parting. Something bids me stay,
And guard a mother's life. Oft have I read
Of wondrous deeds by one bold arm atchieved.
Our foes are two; no more: let me go forth,
And see if any shield can guard Glenalvon!
Lady R. If thou regard'st thy mother, or rever'st
Thy father's memory, think of this no more.
One thing I have to say before we part:
Long wert thou lost; and thou art found, my child,
In a most fearful season. War and battle
I have great cause to dread. Too well I see
Which way the current of thy temper sets:
To-day I've found thee. Oh! my long-lost hope!
If thou to giddy valour giv'st the rein,
To-morrow I may lose my son for ever.
The love of thee, before thou saw'st the light,
Sustained my life when thy brave father fell.
If thou shalt fall, I have nor love nor hope
In this waste world! My son, remember me!
Doug. What shall I say? How can I give you comfort?
The God of battles of my life dispose
As may be best for you! for whose dear sake
I will not bear myself as I resolved.
But yet consider, as no vulgar name,
That which I boast, sounds among martial men,
How will inglorious caution suit my claim?
The post of fate unshrinking I maintain.
My country's foes must witness who I am.
On the invader's heads I'll prove my birth,
Till friends and foes confess the genuine strain.
If in this strife I fall, blame not your son,
Who, if he lives not honoured, must not live.
Lady R. I will not utter what my bosom feels.
Too well I love that valour which I warn.
Farewell, my son! my counsels are but vain,
[*Embracing.*
And as high Heaven hath willed it, all must be.
[*Separate.*
Gaze not on me, thou wilt mistake the path;
I'll point it out again.
[*Just as they are separating.*

Enter from the wood Lord RANDOLPH *and* GLENALVON.

Lord R. Not in her presence.
Now——
Glen. I am prepared.
Lord R. No: I command thee stay.
I go alone: it never shall be said
That I took odds to combat mortal man.
The noblest vengeance is the most complete.
[*Exit.*
[GLENALVON *makes some steps to the same side of the stage, listens and speaks.*
Glen. Demons of death, come, settle on my sword,
And to a double slaughter guide it home!
The lover and the husband both must die.
Lord R. [*Behind the scenes.*] Draw, villain! draw!
Doug. [*Without.*] Assail me not, lord Randolph;

Not as thou lov'st thyself. [*Clashing of swords.*
Glen. [*Running out.*] Now is the time.

Enter Lady RANDOLPH, *at the other side of the stage, faint and breathless.*

Lady R. Lord Randolph, hear me, all shall be thine own!
But spare! Oh, spare my son!

Enter DOUGLAS, *with a sword in each hand.*

Doug. My mother's voice!
I can protect thee still.
Lady R. He lives, he lives!
For this, for this to Heaven eternal praise!
But sure I saw thee fall.
Doug. It was Glenalvon;
Just as my arm had mastered Randolph's sword,
The villain came behind me; but I slew him.
Lady R. Behind thee! ah! thou art wounded! Oh, my child,
How pale thou look'st! And shall I lose thee now?
Doug. Do not despair: I feel a little faintness,
I hope it will not last. [*Leans upon his sword.*
Lady R. There is no hope!
And we must part! The hand of death is on thee!
Oh! my beloved child! O Douglas, Douglas!
[DOUGLAS *growing more and more faint.*
Doug. Too soon we part: I have not long been Douglas;
O destiny! hardly thou deal'st with me!
Clouded and hid, a stranger to myself,
In low and poor obscurity I've lived.
Lady R. Has Heaven preserved thee for an end like this!
Doug. Oh! had I fallen as my brave fathers fell,
Turning with fatal arm the tide of battle,
Like them I should have smiled and welcomed death:
But thus to perish by a villain's hand!
Cut off from nature's and from glory's course,
Which never mortal was so fond to run.
Lady R. Hear, justice, hear! stretch thy avenging arm! [DOUGLAS *falls.*
Doug. Unknown I die; no tongue shall speak of me.
Some noble spirits, judging by themselves,
May yet conjecture what I might have proved,
And think life only wanting to my fame:
But who shall comfort thee?
Lady R. Despair, despair!
Doug. Oh, had it pleased high Heaven to let me live
A little while!——my eyes, that gaze on thee,
Grow dim apace! my mother—O! my mother!
[*Dies.*

Enter Lord RANDOLPH *and* ANNA.

Lord R. Thy words, thy words of truth, have pierced my heart;
I am the stain of knighthood and of arms.
Oh! if my brave deliverer survives
The traitor's sword——
Anna. Alas! look there, my lord.
Lord R. The mother and her son! How curst I am!
Was I the cause? No: I was not the cause.
Yon matchless villain did seduce my soul
To frantic jealousy.
Anna. My lady lives:
The agony of grief hath but suppressed
Awhile her powers.
Lord R. But my deliverer's dead;
The world did once esteem lord Randolph well,
Sincere of heart, for spotless honour famed;
And, in my early days, glory I gained
Beneath the holy banner of the cross.
Now past the noon of life, shame comes upon me;
Reproach and infamy, and public hate,
Are near at hand: for all mankind will think
That Randolph basely stabbed Sir Malcolm's heir.
Lady R. [*recovering.*] Where am I now?—Still in this wretched world!
Grief cannot break a heart so hard as mine.
My youth was worn in anguish: but youth's strength,
With hope's assistance, bore the brunt of sorrow;
And trained me on to be the object now,
On which Omnipotence displays itself,
Making a spectacle, a tale of me,
To awe its vassal man.
Lord R. Oh, misery!
Amidst thy raging grief I must proclaim
My innocence.
Lady R. Thy innocence!
Lord R. My guilt
Is innocence compared with what thou think'st it.
Lady R. Of thee I think not: what have I to do
With thee, or any thing? My son! my son!
My beautiful! my brave! how proud was I
Of thee and of thy valour! my fond heart
O'erflowed this day with transport, when I thought
Of growing old amidst a race of thine,
Who might make up to me their father's childhood,
And bear my brother's and my husband's name;
Now all my hopes are dead! A little while
Was I a wife! a mother not so long!
What am I now?—I know.—But I shall be
That only whilst I please; for such a son
And such a husband drive me to my fate.
[*Runs out*
Lord R. Follow her, Anna: I myself would follow,
But in this rage she must abhor my presence.
[*Exit* ANNA.

Enter Old NORVAL.

Old Nor. I heard the voice of woe: Heaven guard my child!
Lord R. Already is the idle gaping crowd,
The spiteful vulgar, come to gaze on Randolph.
Begone.
Old Nor. I fear thee not. I will not go.

Here I'll remain. I'm an accomplice, lord,
With thee in murder. Yes, my sins did help
To crush down to the ground this lovely plant.
Oh, noblest youth that ever yet was born!
Sweetest and best, gentlest and bravest spirit,
That ever blest the world! Wretch that I am,
Who saw that noble spirit swell and rise
Above the narrow limits that confined it,
Yet never was by all thy virtues won
To do thee justice, and reveal the secret,
Which, timely known, had raised thee far above
The villain's snare. Oh! I am punished now!
These are the hairs that should have strewed the ground,
And not the locks of Douglas.

[*Tears his hair, and throws himself upon the body of* DOUGLAS.

Lord R. I know thee now: thy boldness I forgive:
My crest is fallen. For thee I will appoint
A place of rest, if grief will let thee rest.
I will reward, although I cannot punish.
Cursed, cursed Glenalvon! he escaped too well,
Though slain and baffled by the hand he hated.
Foaming with rage and fury to the last,
Cursing his conqueror, the felon died.

Enter ANNA.

Anna. My lord! My lord!
Lord R. Speak: I can hear of horror.
Anna. Horror, indeed!
Lord R. Matilda—
Anna. Is no more:
She ran, she flew like lightning up the hill,
Nor halted till the precipice she gained,
Beneath whose lowering top the river falls
Ingulphed in rifted rocks: thither she came,
As fearless as the eagle lights upon it,
And headlong down——
Lord R. 'Twas I, alas! 'twas I
That filled her breast with fury; drove her down
The precipice of death! Wretch that I am!
Anna. Oh, had you seen her last despairing look!
Upon the brink she stood, and cast her eyes
Down on the deep: then, lifting up her head
And her white hands to Heaven, seeming to say,
Why am I forced to this? she plunged herself
Into the empty air.
Lord R. I will not vent,
In vain complaints, the passion of my soul.
Peace in this world I never can enjoy.
These wounds the gratitude of Randolph gave;
They speak aloud. I am resolved. I'll go
Straight to the battle, where the man that makes
Me turn aside must threaten worse than death.
Thou, faithful to thy mistress, take this ring,
Full warrant of my power. Let every rite
With cost and pomp upon their funerals wait:
For Randolph hopes he never shall return.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

AN Epilogue I ask't; but not one word
Our bard will write. He vows 'tis most absurd
With comic wit to contradict the strain
Of tragedy, and make your sorrows vain.
Sadly he says, that pity is the best,
And noblest passion of the human breast:
For when its sacred streams the heart o'erflow,
In gushes pleasure with the tide of woe:
And when its waves retire, like those of Nile,
They leave behind them such a golden soil,
That there the virtues without culture grow,
There the sweet blossoms of affection blow.
These were his words; void of delusive art,
I felt them: for he spoke them from his heart.
Nor will I now attempt, with witty folly,
To chase away celestial melancholy.

CLEONE,

BY

DODSLEY.

PROLOGUE.

BY WILLIAM MELMOTH, ESQ.—SPOKEN BY MR ROSS.

'Twas once the mode inglorious war to wage
With each bold bard that durst attempt the stage,
And prologues were but preludes to engage.
Then mourn'd the muse not story'd woes alone,
Condemn'd to weep, with tears unfeign'd, her own.
Past are those hostile days: and wits no more
One undistinguished fate with fools deplore.
No more the muse laments her long-felt wrongs,
From the rude licence of tumultuous tongues:
In peace each bard prefers his doubtful claim,
And as he merits, meets, or misses, fame.
'Twas thus in Greece (when Greece fair science blest,
And Heav'n-born arts their chosen land possest)
Th' assembled people sate with decent pride,
Patient to hear, and skilful to decide;
Less forward far to censure than to praise,
Unwillingly refus'd the rival bays.
Yes; they whom candour and true taste inspire,
Blame not with half the passion they admire;
Each little blemish with regret descry,
But mark the beauties with a raptur'd eye.
Yet modest fears invade our author's breast,
With Attic lore, or Latian, all unblest;
Deny'd by Fate through classic fields to stray,
Where bloom these wreaths which never know decay;
Where arts new force from kindred arts acquire,
And poets catch from poets genial fire.
Not thus he boasts the breast humane to prove,
And touch those springs which generous passions move,
To melt the soul by scenes of fabled woe,
And bid the tear for fancy'd sorrows flow;
Far humbler paths he treads in quest of fame,
And trusts to Nature what from Nature came.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Sifroy, *a General Officer,*	Cleone, *the Wife of Sifroy.*
Beaufort *senior, Father of Cleone.*	Isabella, *her Companion.*
Beaufort *junior, her Brother.*	*A Child about five years old.*
Paulet, *the Friend of Sifroy.*	
Glanville, *a near Relation.*	*Officers of Justice, Servants, &c.*
Ragozin, *a Servant corrupted by Glanville.*	

Scene,—*Sifroy's House, and an adjoining Wood.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sifroy's House.*

Enter GLANVILLE *and* ISABELLA.

Glan. WHAT means this diffidence, this idle fear?
Have I not given thee proof my heart is thine?
Proof that I mean to sanctify our joys
By sacred wedlock! Why then doubt my truth?
Why hesitate, why tremble thus to join
In deeds, which justice and my love to thee
Alone inspire? If we are one, our hopes,
Our views, our interests ought to be the same.
And canst thou tamely see this proud Sifroy
Triumphant lord it o'er my baffled rights?
Those late acquir'd demesnes, by partial hand
Consign'd to him, in equity are mine.

Isab. The story oft I've heard: yet sure Sifroy
Hath every legal title to that wealth
By will bequeath'd; and childless should he die,
The whole were thine. Wait then till time—

Glan. Art thou,
My Isabella, thou an advocate
For him whose hand, with felon arts, with-holds
Those treasures which I covet but for thee?
Where is thy plighted faith?—thy vows?—thy truth?

Isab. Forbear reproach!—O Glanville, love to thee
Hath robb'd me of my truth—seduc'd me on
From step to step, till virtue quite forsook me.
False if I am, 'tis to myself, not thee;
Thou hast my heart, and thou shalt guide my will,
Obedient to thy wishes.

Glan. Hear me then—
This curst Sifroy stands in my fortune's way:
I must remove him.—Well I know his weakness—
His fiery temper favours my design,
And aids the plot that works his own undoing.
Yet whilst far off remov'd, he leads our troops,
The nation's doughty chief, he stands secure,
Beyond the reach of my avenging hand.
But this will force him home—I have convey'd,
By Ragozin his servant, whom I sent
On other business, letters which disclose
His wife's amour with Paulet.

Isab. Ah! though me
Thou hast convinc'd, and I believe her false,
Think'st thou Sifroy will credit the report?
Will not remembrance of her seeming truth,
Her artful modesty, and acted fondness,
Secure the easy confidence of love?

Glan. I know it ought not. Weak must be the man
Who builds his hopes on such deceitful ground.
Paulet is young, not destitute of passion;
Her husband absent, they are oft together:
Then she hath charms to warm the coldest breast,
Melt the most rigid virtue into love,
And tempt the firmest friendship to be frail.
All this I've urg'd, join'd with such circumstance,
Such strong presumptive proof, as cannot fail
To shake the firm foundations of his trust.
This once accomplish'd, his own violence
And heated rage, will urge him to commit
Some desperate act, and plunge him into ruin.

Isab. But grant thou should'st succeed, what will ensue?
Suppose him dead, doth he not leave an heir,
An infant son, that will prevent thy claim?

Glan. That bar were easily remov'd.—But soft,
Who's here? 'Tis Ragozin return'd.

Enter RAGOZIN.

Glan. What news,
Dear Ragozin? How did Sifroy receive
My letters? Speak—My vast impatience would
Know all at once.—What does his rage intend?

Rag. All you could wish. A whirlwind is but weak
To the wild storm that agitates his breast.
At first indeed he doubted—swore 'twas false—
Impossible—But as he read, his looks
Grew fierce; pale horror trembled on his cheek;
O she is vile!—It must, it must be so—
Glanville is just, is good, and scorns to wrong her—
I know his friendship, know his honest heart—
Then falling, sobb'd in speechless agony.

Glan. Good, very good!—I knew 'twould gall—proceed.

Rag. His smother'd grief at length burst forth in rage.
He started from the floor—he drew his sword—
And fixing it with violence in my grasp—
Plunge this, he cried, O plunge it in the heart
Of that vile traitor, Paulet!—Yet forbear—
That exquisite revenge my own right hand
Demands, nor will I give it to another!
This said—push'd on by rage, he to her sire
Dispatch'd a letter, opening to him all
Her crime, and his dishonour. This to you.
[*Gives a letter.*

Glan. How eagerly he runs into the toils,
Which I have planted for his own destruction!—
Dear Ragozin, success shall double all
My promises; and now we are embark'd,
We must proceed, whatever storms arise.

Isab. But read the letter.

[GLANVILLE *opens the letter and reads.*

'Though thou hast stabb'd me to the heart, I cannot but thank thy goodness for the tender regard thou hast shewn to my honour. The traitor Paulet shall die by my own hand: that righteous vengeance must be mine. Mean time, forbid

the villain's entrance to my house. As to her who was once my wife, let her go to her father's, to whom I have written; leaving it to him to vindicate her virtue, or conceal her shame. I am in too much confusion to add more. SIFROY.'
This is enough—by Heaven! I sought no more.
It is the point at which my wishes aim'd.
The death of Paulet must include his own;
Justice will take that life my injuries seek,
Nor shall suspicion cast one glance on me.
But does he purpose soon to leave the army,
Or let his vengeance sleep?

Rag. All wild he raves,
That honour should forbid to quit his charge.
Yet what resolves the tumult in his breast
May urge, is hard to say.

Glan. We must prepare
For his arrival; well I know his rage
Will burst all bounds of prudence. Thou, my friend,
(For from the hour which shall complete our business,
Thy servitude shall cease) be diligent
To watch all accidents, and well improve
Whatever chance may rise.

Rag. Trust to my care. [*Exit.*

Glan. Now, Isabella! now th' important hour
To prove my truth, arises to my wish.
No longer shalt thou live the humble friend
Of this Cleone, but, her equal born,
Shalt rise by me to grace an equal sphere.

Isab. Her equal born I am—nor can my heart
A keener pang than base dependence feel.
Yet weak by nature, and in fear for thee,
I tremble for th' event.—O should'st thou fail—

Glan. To me, my Isabella, trust the proof
Of her conceal'd amour. I know full well
Her modesty is mere disguise, assum'd
To cheat the world; but it deceives not me.
I shall unveil her latent wickedness,
And on her midnight revels pour the day.

Isab. Scarce can my heart give credit—

Glan. Thou, alas,
Art blinded by the semblance she displays
Of truth and innocence; but I explore
Her inmost soul, and in her secret thoughts
Read wantonness. Believe me, this gay youth,
Mask'd in the guise of friendship to Sifroy,
Is her vile paramour. But I forget;
Tell Ragozin, my love, to wait without;
This business asks dispatch, and I may want
His useful aid.

Isab. I go; but still my heart
Beats anxious, lest the truth of thy suspicions
Should fail of proof. [*Exit* ISABELLA.

Glan. Fear nothing, I'm secure.—
Fond, easy fool! whom for my use alone,
Not pleasure, I've ensnar'd; thou little dream'st,
That fir'd with fair Cleone's heaven of charms,
I burn for their enjoyment. There, there too,
Did this Sifroy, this happy hated rival,
Defeat the first warm hopes that fir'd my bosom.
I mark'd her beauties rising in their bloom,
And purpos'd for myself the rip'ning sweetness;
But ere my hand could reach the tempting fruit,
'Twas ravish'd from its eager grasp. And, oh
Would fate at last permit me to prevail,
Vengeance were satisfy'd. I will attend her;
And urge my suit, though oft repuls'd, once more.
If she's obdurate still, my slighted love
Converts to hatred: I will then exert
The power which her deluded lord hath given,
Drive her this instant hence, and in her flight,
To glut my great revenge, she too shall fall.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to another Room.*

Enter CLEONE *and a Servant.*

Cle. Paulet! my husband's friend! give him admittance;
His friendship sympathizes with my love,
Cheers me by talking of my absent lord,
And sooths my heart with hopes of his return.

Enter PAULET.

Pau. Still do these low'ring clouds of sorrow shade
Cleone's brow, and sadden all her hours?

Cle. Ah Paulet! have I not just cause to mourn?
Three tedious years have past since these sad eyes
Beheld my dear Sifroy: and the stern brow
Of horrid war still frowns upon my hopes.

Pau. The fate of war, 'tis true, hath long detain'd
My noble friend from your fond arms and mine:
But his redoubted sword by this last stroke
Must soon reduce the foe to sue for peace.
The gallant chief who led the barbarous host,
And was himself their soul, is fallen in battle,
Slain by the valiant hand of your Sifroy.

Cle. To me, alas, his courage seems no virtue;
Dead to all joy, but what his safety gives,
To every hope, but that of his return,
I dread the danger which his valour seeks,
And tremble at his glory. O good Heaven!
Restore him soon to these unhappy arms,
Or much I fear, they'll never more enfold him.

Pau. What means Cleone? No new danger can
Affright you for my friend. I fear your breast
Beats with the dread of some impending ill,
Threatening yourself. Now, by the love that binds
My heart to your Sifroy, let me entreat,
If my assistance can avail you aught,
That, to the utmost hazard of my life,
You will command my service.

Cle. Kind Heaven, I thank thee! My Sifroy hath yet
One faithful friend. O Paulet—but to thee,
The many virtues that adorn the mind
Of my lov'd lord, and made me once so blest,
Twere needless to display. In mine alone
His happiness was plac'd; no grief, no care
Came ever near my bosom; not a pain
But what his tenderness partaking, sooth'd.
All day with fondness would he gaze upon me,
And to my listening heart repeat such things,

As only love like his knew how to feel.
O my Sifroy! when, when wilt thou return?
Alas, thou know'st not to what bold attempts
Thy unsuspecting virtue has betray'd me!
Pau. What danger thus alarms Cleone's fear?
Cle. I am asham'd to think, and blush to say,
That in my husband's absence this poor form,
These eyes, or any feature should retain
The power to please—but Glanville well you know—
Pau. Sure you suspect not him of base designs!
He wears the semblance of much worth and honour.
Cle. So to the eye the speckled serpent wears
A shining beauteous form; but deep within,
Foul stings and deadly poisons lurk unseen.
O Paulet, this smooth serpent hath so crept
Into the bosom of Sifroy, so wound
Himself about my love's unguarded heart,
That he believes him harmless as a dove.
Pau. Good Heaven, if thou abhorr'st deceit, why suffer
A villain's face to wear the look of virtue?
Who would have thought his loose desires had flown
So high a pitch!—Have you imparted aught
Of his attempts to Isabella?
Cle. No.
Pau. I had suspicion his designs were there.
Cle. I've thought so too: nay have some cause to fear
That she's his wife. This hath restrain'd my tongue.
Pau. 'Tis well if she deserve your tenderness.
But say, Cleone, let me know the means,
Which this most impious man, this trusted friend,
Hath taken to betray—
Cle. I hear his voice;
And this way he directs his hated steps.
Retire into that room—he seldom fails
To hint his bold desires. Yourself perhaps
May thence detect him, and by open shame
Deter him from persisting.
[PAU. *goes into the room.*

Enter GLANVILLE.

Glan. I greet you, lady, with important news.
The Saracens are beaten—yet Sifroy,
Coldly neglectful of your blooming charms,
Pursues a remnant of the flying foe
To strong Avignon's walls, where shelter'd safe,
The hardy troops may bear a tedious siege.
Why then, Cleone, should you still resist
The soft entreaties of my warm desire?
Methinks the man but ill deserves your truth,
Who leaves the sweet Elysium of your arms
To tread the dangerous fields of horrid war.
Cle. And what, O Glanville, what dost thou deserve?
Thou, who with treachery repay'st the trust
Of sacred friendship? Thou, who but to quench
A loose desire, a lawless passion's rage,
Would'st banish truth and honour from thy breast?
Glan. Honour!—What's honour? a vain phantom, rais'd
To fright the weak from tasting those delights,
Which nature's voice, that law supreme, allows.
Be wise, and laugh at all its idle threats.
Besides, with me your fame would be secure,
Discretion guards my name from censure's tongue.
Cle. And dost thou call hypocrisy, discretion?
Say'st thou that vice is wisdom? Glanville, hear me.
With thee, thou say'st, my fame would be secure;
Unsully'd by the world. It might. Yet know,
Though hid beneath the centre of the earth,
Remov'd from Envy's eye, and Slander's tongue,
Nay from the view of Heaven itself conceal'd,
Still would I shun the very thought of guilt,
Nor wound my secret conscience with reproach.
Glan. Romantic all! Come, come, why were you formed
So tempting fair; why grac'd with ev'ry charm,
With eyes that languish, limbs that move with grace—
Why were these beauties given you, but to sooth
The sweet, the strong sensations they excite?
Why were you made so beauteous, yet so coy?
[*Offers to embrace her, she puts him by with disdain.*
Cle. Base hypocrite! why rather wert thou suffer'd
Beneath fair Virtue's mien to hide a heart
So vile? Why this, good Heaven! But dost thou think
Thy foul devices shall be still conceal'd?
Sifroy shall know thee; thy detested crime
Shall stand reveal'd in all its horrid form.
Glan. Is love a crime? O ask your feeling heart— [PAU. *bursts from the room.*
Pau. Villain, desist!
Glan. Ha! Paulet here!—'Tis well:
He is her minion then! 'Tis as I guess'd;
My letters to Sifroy traduc'd them not. [*Aside.*
Pau. Vile hypocrite!—what! lurk such warm desires
Beneath that sober mask of sanctity?
Is this the firm undoubted honesty,
In which Sifroy confiding, sleeps secure?
Glan. And is it fit that thou should'st lecture vice?
Thou who, even here, this moment wert conceal'd,
The favourite object of lewd privacy?
Should'st thou declaim against the rich repast,
Thy gluttonous appetite alone enjoys
To all the heights of luxury?—Sweet lady!
Who now shall stand reveal'd before Sifroy?
But I have long, long known your intercourse,
Nor wanted clearer proof to speak your crimes.
[*Going.*
Cle. O heaven and earth!
Pau. Stay, monster! by high Heaven,
Thy life shall answer this vile calumny.
Glan. Dream not I fear!—thy threatenings I despise.
Soon I'll return, to thine and her confusion.
[*Exit* GLAN.

Cle. What have I done? unhappy rash concealment!
This may, alas! give colour to his charge.
Pau. He dares not wrong you with the least surmise,
The slightest imputation on your fame!
Nor would the world believe him. Your fair deeds,
The constant tenor of your virtuous life,
Would triumph o'er th' audacious tale.
Cle. Ah, Paulet!
The sting of Slander strikes her venom deep.
An envious world with joy devours the tale,
That stains with infamy a spotless name.
Yet what's the vain opinion of the world!
To keep one voice, one single heart's esteem,
Is all my wish. If my Sifroy but think——
Pau. Wound not your peace with vain ungrounded fears.
My friend is noble, knows your virtues well;
Nor will he suffer jealousy to shake
His generous mind with doubt. And for that wretch,
This arm shall give him chastisement.
Cle. Ah! no;
I fear the chastisement of Glanville's guilt
May loose the tongue of censure on my innocence,
And can I bear, now, in my husband's absence,
The whisper'd falsehood of malicious tales,
That cast a doubt on his Cleone's truth?
O rather leave his punishment to Heaven!
At least defer it till my lord's return.
Pau. And shall the man I love return, and find
A villain unchastis'd, who in my sight
Presumptuous dar'd to wound his honour!
It must not, shall not be.

Re-enter GLANVILLE *with* RAGOZIN.

Glan. Mark me, young sir,
'Tis with authority that I forbid
Your entrance in this house. Sifroy, convinc'd
Of all your secret crimes with that vile wanton,
Spurns from his door the falsehood he disdains.
Cle. Let me not hear it! I! am I a wanton?
Does my dear lord think his Cleone vile?
Glan. He knows it well.
Pau. Villain, 'tis false! He scorns
So mean a thought.
Glan. To silence every doubt,
See his own hand.
Pau. [*Shewing the letter to* RAG.] Say, whence is this? who brought it?
Rag. I brought it from my master.
Glan. Look upon it.
[CLE. *and* PAU. *look over it.*
Cle. Am I then banish'd from my husband's house?
Branded with infamy!—was once his wife!
Unkind Sifroy! am I not still thy wife?
Indeed thy faithful wife! and when thou know'st,
As know thou wilt, how falsely I'm accus'd,
This cruel sentence sure will pierce thy heart.
Pau. Amazement strikes me dumb!—This impious scroll
Is forg'd. Sifroy, though rash, is noble, just,
And good. Too good, too noble to permit
So mean a thought to harbour in his breast.
Cle. No: 'tis his hand—his seal. And can I bear
Suspicion! Ah! Sifroy, didst thou not know
My heart incapable——
Pau. Licentious wretch!
At what fell mischief has thy malice aim'd?
Glan. At thine and her detection, which at length
I have accomplish'd.
Pau. Impudent and vain!
Think'st thou Cleone's virtue, her fair truth,
Can suffer taint from thy unhallow'd breath?
Were they not proof but now against thy arts?
Glan. Mistaken man! To gain one personal proof
Of her incontinence, that feign'd attempt
Was made; all other proof I had before.
And why I fail'd thou know'st;
Who, in her private chamber close conceal'd,
Mad'st it imprudent she should then comply.
Cle. Detested slanderer! I despise thy baseness;
Disdain reply; and trust in Heaven's high hand
To dash thy bold designs. [*Exit* CLE.
Pau. [*Whispering.*] Observe me, sir—
This insult on the honour of my friend
Must be chastis'd. At morning's earliest dawn,
In the close vale, behind the castle's wall,
Prepare to meet me arm'd,
Glan. Be well assur'd,
I will not fail. [*Exit* PAU.
Yet stay—let Prudence guide me——
Courage, what is't?—'tis folly's boisterous rashness,
And draws its owner into hourly dangers.
I hold it safer he were met to-night. [*Aside.*
Thou seest, my Ragozin, we are embark'd
Upon a troubled sea: our safeties now
Depend on boldly stemming every wave,
That might o'erwhelm our hopes. Paulet must die—
He's dangerous, and not only may defeat
Our enterprise, but bring our lives in hazard.
Rag. Shall we not frustrate thus your first design,
To make the law subservient to your aims
Against the life and fortunes of Sifroy?
Glan. Leave that to me. Sifroy, full well I know,
Will soon arrive. Thou, when the gloom of night
Shall cast a veil upon the deeds of men,
Trace Paulet's steps, and in his bosom plunge
Thy dagger's point; thus shall thy care prevent
His future babbling; and to prove the deed
Upon Sifroy, be mine.
Rag. He dies this night.
Glan. Let thy first blow make sure his death,
So shall no noise detect thee. Hither strait
Convey his corpse, which secretly interr'd
Within the garden's bound, prevents discovery,

'Till I shall spring the mine of their destruction.
Rag. He shall not live an hour. [*Exit* RAG.
Glan. Hence, hence remorse!
I must not, will not feel thy scorpion sting.
Yet hell is in my breast, and all its fiends
Distract my resolutions.—I am plung'd
In blood, and must wade through: no safety now
But on the farther shore. Come then, Revenge,
Ambition come, and disappointed Love!
Be you my dread companions: steel, O steel
My heart with triple firmness, nerve my arm
With tenfold strength, and guide it to achieve
The deeds of terror which yourselves inspir'd.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sifroy's House.*

Enter GLANVILLE *and* ISABELLA.

Glan. Sure the dark hand of death ere this hath clos'd
The prying eyes of Paulet, and secur'd
Our bold attempt from danger. But hast thou,
Free from suspicion, to Cleone's hand
Convey'd the letter, forg'd against myself,
Pressing her instant flight, and branding me
With black designs against her life?
Isab. I have;
Pretending 'twas receiv'd from hands unknown.
But lurks no danger here? Will not this letter,
Discover'd after death, thy guilt betray?
Glan. There am I guarded too. The deed once done,
A deep enormous cavern in the wood,
Receives her body, and for ever hides.
But she perus'd, thou say'st, the letter—Well—
How wrought it?—Say—this moment will she fly?
Success in this, and all shall be our own.
Isab. Silent she paus'd—and read it o'er and o'er.
Then lifting up her eyes—Forgive him, Heaven!
Was all she said. But soon her rising fear
Resolv'd on quick escape. Suspicion too,
That all her servants are by thee corrupted,
Prompts her to fly alone, save with her child,
The young Sifroy, whom, clasping to her breast,
And bathing with a flood of tears, she means
Safe from thy snares, to shelter with her father.
Glan. Just as I hop'd—Beneath the friendly gloom
Of Baden wood, whose unfrequented shades
They needs must pass to reach her father's house,
I have contriv'd, and now ordain their fall.
Kindly she plans her scheme, as though herself
Were my accomplice.
Isab. As we parted, tears
Gush'd from her eyes—she closely press'd my hand,
And, hesitating, cry'd—O Isabella!
If 'tis not now too late, beware of Glanville.
I scarce could hold from weeping.
Glan. Fool! root out
That weakness, which unfits th' aspiring soul
For great designs. But hush! who's here?

Enter RAGOZIN.

Glan. Say, quickly—
Is our first work achiev'd?
Rag. Successfully.
With two bold ruffians, whose assisting hands
Were hir'd to make the business sure, I trac'd
His steps with care; and in the darksome path
Which leads beside the ruin'd abbey's wall,
With furious onset suddenly attack'd him.
Instant he drew, and in my arm oblique
Fix'd a slight wound; but my associates soon
Perform'd their office; and, betwixt them borne,
I left him to an hasty burial, where
You first directed.
Glan. We are then secure
From his detection; and may now advance
With greater safety. O my Ragozin,
But one step more remains, to plant our feet
On this Sifroy's possessions; and methinks
Kind opportunity now points the path
Which leads us to our wish.
Rag. Propose the means.
Glan. This hour Cleone with her infant boy,
Borrowing faint courage from the moon's pale beam,
Prepares to seek the mansion of her father.
Thou know'st the neighbouring wood through which they pass.
Rag. I know each path and every brake.
Glan. There hid
In secret ambush, thou must intercept
Her journey.
Rag. And direct her to the world
Unknown?
Glan. Thou read'st my meaning right. Go thou
To hasten her departure, and to keep
Her fears awake. [*To* ISABELLA.
Isab. Already she believes
Her life depends upon her instant flight. [*Exit* ISABELLA.
Glan. And haply ours. Each moment that she lives
Grows dangerous now; and should she reach her father,
All may be lost. Let therefore no delay
Hang on thy foot-steps: Terror wings her flight;
Our danger calls at least for equal speed.

Rag. They 'scape me not. I know the private path
They needs must tread through Baden's lonesome wood,
And death shall meet them in the dreary gloom.
Glan. Meantime, soon as she leaves her house, I raise,
From whispering tongues, a probable report,
That she with Paulet seeks some foreign shore.
This will confirm her guilt, and shelter us
From all suspicion.
Rag. True; both gone at once
Will give an air of truth so plausible—
Glan. Hark! hush!
Rag. Who is it?
Glan. 'Tis Cleone's voice!
This way she comes—we must not now be seen.
Fly to thy post, and think on thy reward.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter CLEONE *with her Child.*

Cle. No Paulet to be found! Misfortune sure
Prevents his friendship; and I dare not wait
For his assistance. Friendless and alone
I wander forth, Heaven my sole guide, and truth
My sole support. But come, my little love,
Thou wilt not leave me.
Child. No, indeed I won't!
I'll love you, and go with you every where,
If you will let me.
Cle. My sweet innocent!
Thou shalt go with me. I've no comfort left
But thee. I had—I had a husband once,
And thou a father.—But we're now cast out
From his protection, banish'd from his love.
Child. Why won't he love us? Sure I've heard you say,
You lov'd him dearly.
Cle. O my bursting heart!
His innocence will kill me. So I do,
My angel, and I hope you'll love him too.
Child. Yes, and so I will, if he'll love you: and can't
I make him love you?
Cle. Yes, my dear; for how
Could he withstand that sweet persuasive look
Of infant innocence!
Child. O then he shall,
If ever I do see him, he shall love you.
Cle. My best, my only friend! and wilt thou plead
Thy poor wrong'd mother's cause?

Enter ISABELLA.

Isab. Dear madam, haste! why thus delay your flight,
When dangers rise around?
Cle. Indeed, my steps
Will linger, Isabella.—O 'tis hard—
Alas, thou canst not tell how hard it is—
To leave a husband's house so dearly lov'd!
Yet go I must—my life is here unsafe.
Pardon, good Heaven, the guilt of those who seek it!
I fear not death: yet fain methinks would live
To clear my truth to my unkind Sifroy.
Isab. O doubt not, madam, he will find the truth,
And banish from his breast this strange suspicion.
But haste, dear lady, wing your steps with haste,
Lest death should intercept—
Cle. And must I go?
Adieu, dear mansion of my happiest years!
Adieu, sweet shades! each well-known bower, adieu!
Where I have hung whole days upon his words,]
And never thought the tender moments long—
All, all my hopes of future peace, farewell!
[*Throws herself on her knees.*
But, O great Power! who, bending from thy throne,
Look'st down with pitying eyes on erring man,
Whom weakness blinds, and passions lead astray,
Impute not to Sifroy this cruel wrong!
O heal his bosom, wounded by the darts
Of lying slander, and restore to him
That peace, which I must never more regain.
[*Rises.*
Come, my dear love, Heaven will, I trust, protect
And guide our wandering steps! Yet stay—who knows,
Perhaps my father too, if slander's voice
Hath reach'd his ear, may chide me from his door,
Or spurn me from his feet!—My sickening heart
Dies in me at that thought! Yet surely he
Will hear me speak! A parent sure, will not
Reject his child unheard!
Isab. He surely will not. Whence these groundless fears?
Cle. Indeed I am to blame, to doubt his goodness.
Farewell, my friend!—And oh, when thou shalt see
My still belov'd Sifroy; say, I forgive him—
Say I but live to clear my truth to him;
Then hope to lay my sorrows in the grave,
And that my wrongs, lest they should wound his peace,
May be forgotten. [*Exit* CLEONE, *with her Child.*
Isab. Gracious Heaven! her grief
Strikes through my heart! Her truth, her innocence
Are surely wrong'd.—O wherefore did I yield
My virtue to this man? Unhappy hour!
But 'tis too late!—Nor dare I now relent.

Enter GLANVILLE.

Glan. The gate is clos'd against her, never more
(If right I read the doom) to give her entrance.
Thus far, my Isabella, our designs
Glide smoothly on. The hand of prudence is
To me the hand of providence.
Isab. Alas!
How blind, how impotent is human prudence!
I wish, and hope indeed, that, screen'd beneath
The shades of night, which hide these darker deeds,
We too may lie conceal'd: but ah, my hopes

Are dash'd with fear, lest Heaven's all-piercing eye,
That marks our covert guilt, should flash detection.
Glan. [*Sternly.*] If thy vain fears betray us not, we're safe.
Observe me well.—Had I the least surmise,
That struck by conscience, or by phantoms awed.
Thou now would'st shrink—and leave me, or betray,
By all the terrors that would shake my soul
To perpetrate the deed, thou too should'st fall!
Isab. And canst thou then suspect, that after all
I've done to prove my love, I should betray thee?
O Glanville! thou art yet, it seems, to learn,
That in her fears though weak, a woman's love
Inspires her soul to dare beyond her sex.
Glan. Forgive me, Isabella, I suspect
Thee not: this raging fever in my brain
Distracts my reason. But no more—I know
Thee faithful, and will hence be calm.
Isab. Indeed my heart has been so wholly thine,
That ev'n its springs are temper'd to thy wish.
Glan. Think on my warmth no more. I was to blame.
But come, my love, our chief, our earliest care
Must be to give loud rumour instant voice,
That both, detected in their loose amour,
Are fled together. Whisper thou the tale
First to the servants, in whose listening ears
Suspicions are already sown; while I
Th' unwelcome tidings to her sire convey.
[*Exit* ISABELLA *one way, and as* GLANVILLE *is going out the other, he meets a Servant.*
Serv. My lady's brother, sir, young Beaufort, just
Arriv'd, enquires for you, or for his sister.
Glan. Attend him in.—The letters of Sifroy
Have reach'd their hands. My story of her flight
Will, like a closing witness well prepar'd,
Confirm her guilt.

Enter BEAUFORT *Junior.*

Beauf. jun. What strange suspicion, Glanville, has possess'd
The bosom of Sifroy? Whence had it birth?
Or on what ground could malice fix her stand,
To throw the darts of slander on a name
So guarded as Cleone's?
Glan. I could wish—
It gives me pain to speak—but I could wish
The conduct of Cleone had not given
So fair a mark.
Beauf. jun. So fair a mark!—What! who?
Cleone, say'st thou!—Hath my sister given
So fair a mark to slander?—Have a care!
The breath that blasts her fame may raise a storm
Not easily appeas'd.
Glan. It grieves me, sir,
That you compel me to disclose, what you
In bitterness of soul must hear. But she
And prudence have of late been much estrang'd.
Beauf. jun. Defame her not—Discretion crowns her brow,
And in her modest eye sweet innocence
Smiles on detraction. Where, where is my sister?
She shall confront thy words—her look alone
Shall prove her truth, and calumny confound.
Glan. You surely know not, sir, that she is fled—
Beauf. jun. What say'st thou? Fled!—Surprise choaks up my words!
It cannot be! Fled! whither?—Gone! with whom?
Glan. With Paulet, sir, Sifroy's young friend.
Beauf. jun. Impossible!
I'm on the rack! Tell, I conjure thee, tell
The whole mysterious tale. Where are they gone?
Glan. That they conceal. I only know, that both,
Soon as they found their impious love disclos'd,
With instant speed withdrew: and 'tis suppos'd
Will seek for shelter on some foreign shore.
Beauf. jun. Where then is truth, and where is virtue fled,
Ere while her dear companions?—How, my sister,
How art thou fallen!—Thy father too—O parricide!
Had'st thou no pity on his bending age?
On his fond heart?—too feeble now to bear
So rude a shock.
Glan. Can it not be conceal'd?
Beauf. jun. That hope were vain. Himself impatient comes,
From his lov'd daughter to enquire the cause
Of this opprobrious charge. And see, he's here.

Enter BEAUFORT *Senior.*

Beauf. sen. Where is my daughter? where my injur'd child?
O bring me to her! she hath yet a father,
(Thanks to the gracious powers who spar'd my life
For her protection) ready to receive
With tender arms his child, though rudely cast
From her rash husband's door.—What mean these tears
That trickle down thy cheek? she is not dead!
Beauf. jun. Good Heaven! what shall I say?—No, sir—not dead—
She is not dead—but oh!—
Beauf. sen. But what? Wound not
My heart! where is she? lead me to my child—
'Tis from herself alone that I will hear
The story of her wrongs.
Beauf. jun. Alas! dear sir,
She is not here.
Beauf. sen. Not here!
Beauf. jun. O fortify
Your heart, my dearest father, to support,
If possible, this unexpected stroke!
My sister, sir—why must I speak her shame!
My wretched sister, yielding to the lure
Of Paulet's arts, hath left her husband's house.

Beauf. sen. Great Pow'r! then have I liv'd, alas! too long.
This is indeed too much. I cannot bear—
But 'tis impossible!—does not thy heart,
My son, bear testimony for thy sister
Against this calumny?—What circumstance,
[*To* GLANVILLE.
What proof have we of my Cleone's guilt?
Glan. Is not their disappearing both at once,
A strong presumption of their mutual guilt?
Beauf. sen. Presumption, say'st thou! Shall one doubtful fact
Arraign a life of innocence unblam'd?
Shall I give up the virtue of my child,
My heart's sweet peace, the comfort of my age,
On weak surmises?—Sir, I must have proof,
Clear, unambiguous proof, not dark presumption.
Glan. Thus rudely urg'd, my honour bids me speak,
What else I meant in tenderness to spare.
Know then, I found the wanton youth conceal'd
In her apartments.
Beauf. sen. Thou dost then confess
Thyself my child's accuser?—but thy word
Will not suffice. Far other evidence
Must force me to believe, that truth long known,
And native modesty, could thus at once
Desert their station in Cleone's breast.
Glan. Wait then for other evidence—
With such as doubt my honour, I disdain
All further conference. [*Exit* GLANVILLE.
Beauf. jun. What can we think?
His firm undaunted boldness fills my breast
With racking doubts, that dread to be resolv'd,
Yet this suspense is torture's keenest pang.
Beauf. sen. We must not bear it. No, my son, lead on;
We must be satisfy'd. Let us direct
Our steps to Paulet's habitation. There,
It seems, we must enquire. And yet my soul
Strongly impels me to suspect this Glanville;
For can Cleone, virtue's fav'rite ward,
Thus totally be chang'd?—If thou art fall'n—
If thy weak steps, by this bad world seduc'd,
Have devious turn'd into the paths of shame,
Never, ah! never let me live to hear
Thy foul dishonour mention'd. If thou art
Traduc'd—and my fond heart still flatters me
With hope—then, gracious Heaven! spare yet my life,
O spare a father to redress his child!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Area before SIFROY'S *House.* SIFROY *alone.*

Sif. O dreadful change! my house, my sacred home,
At sight of which my heart was wont to bound
With rapture, I now tremble to approach.
Fair mansion, where bright honour long hath dwelt
With my renown'd progenitors, how, how
At last hath vile pollution stain'd thy walls!
Yet look not down with scorn, ye shades rever'd,
On your dishonour'd son—He will not die,
Till just revenge hath, by the wanton's blood,
Aton'd for this disgrace. Yet can it be?
Can my Cleone, she whose tender smile
Fed my fond heart with hourly rapture, she
On whose fair faith alone I built all hope
Of happiness—can she have kill'd my peace,
My honour? Could that angel form, which seem'd
The shrine of purity and truth, become
The seat of wantonness and perfidy?
Ye powers!—should she be wrong'd—in my own heart
How sharp a dagger hath my frenzy plung'd!
O passion-govern'd slave! what hast thou done?
Hath not thy madness from her house, unheard,
Driven out thy bosom friend?—Guiltless, perhaps—
Hell, hell is in that thought!—Thou wretch accurst,
Such thy rash fury, thy unbridled rage,
Her guilt or innocence alike to thee
Must bring distraction. But I'll know the worst.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Changes to a Room in the House. GLANVILLE *and* ISABELLA.

Glan. What dost thou say? Already is Sifroy
Arriv'd? Who saw him? when?
Isab. This moment, from
My window, by the glimmering of the moon,
I saw him pass.
Glan. He comes as I would wish.
His hot-brain'd fury well did I foresee
Would, on the wings of vengeance, swiftly urge
His homeward flight. But I am ready arm'd,
Rash fool! for thy destruction. And though long
Thou hast usurp'd my rights, thy death at last
Shall give me ample justice.
Isab. Ah, beware;
Nor seek his life at peril of thine own.
Glan. Trust me, my love, (though time too precious now
Permits not to unfold to thee my scheme)
I walk in safety, yet have in my grasp,
Secure, his hated life.—But see, he comes—
Retire. [*Exit* ISABELLA.

Enter SIFROY.

Glan. [*Advancing to embrace him.*] My honoured friend!—
Sif. Glanville, forbear—

And ere I join my arms with thee in friendship,
Say, I conjure thee, by that sacred tie,
By all thou hold'st most dear on earth, by all
Thy hopes of heaven, and dread of deepest hell—
Hast thou not wrong'd my wife?

Glan. Unjust Sifroy!
Hath my warm friendship thus regardful been,
Thus jealous of thy honour, and dost thou
Yet question mine? Sure the united bonds
Of friendship and of blood are ties too strong
To leave a doubt of my sincerity,
And soon too clearly, sir, you will discern
Who has been false, and who your faithful friend.

Sif. O rack me not! let dread conviction come—
Her strongest horrors cannot rend my heart
With half the anguish of this torturing doubt.
Speak then—for though the tale should fire my brain
To madness, I must hear. Yet, Glanville, stay—
Let me proceed with caution—my soul's peace
Depends on this event. 'Tis said I am rash—
Bear witness! am I so?—Where is my wife?
Severe I may be, but I will be just.
I cannot, will not hear her faith arraign'd,
Before I see her.

Glan. See her, sir! alas,
Where will you see her?

Sif. Where? thou hast not yet
Convey'd her to her father?—On the wings
Of speed I flew, still hoping to prevent
The rash decree of unreflecting rage.

Glan. Heaven give thee patience!—O Sifroy! my heart,
Though thou hast wrong'd it with unkind suspicion,
Bleeds for thy injuries, for thy distress.
The wife, whom thou so tenderly hast lov'd,
Is fled with Paulet.

Sif. Fled!—How? whither? when?

Glan. This day they disappear'd, and 'tis believ'd
Intend to fly from shame, and leave the land.

Sif. Impossible!—she cannot be so chang'd—
Was she not all my heart could wish?—Take heed—
Once more I charge thee, Glanville, and my soul's
Eternal welfare rests upon thy truth—
Traduce her not! nor drive me to perdition!
For by the flames of vengeance, if I find
Thy accusation true, they shall not 'scape!
Yes, I will trace th' adulterer's private haunts,
Rush like his evil genius on their shame,
And stab the traitor in her faithless arms—
Almighty Power! whose piercing eye explores
The depths of falsehood! take not from my arm
This due revenge—nor tempt mankind to doubt
The justice of thy ways. Why this intrusion?

Enter a Servant.

Serv. My lady's father, sir.

Sif. Her father here!

Glan. Yes, he was here before—thy letters brought him,
And hence went forth in haste to find out Paulet.

Sif. Conduct him in. [*Exit Ser.*
Unhappy man! his grief,
His venerable tears, will wring my heart.
Retire, good Glanville; interviews like these,
Of deep-felt mutual wo, all witness shun.
[*Exit* GLAN.

Enter BEAUFORT *Senior.*

Beauf. sen. Rash man! what hast thou done? on what surmise
Dost thou impeach the honour of my name,
Sacred through many an age from ev'ry stain?
O! thou hast from thy bosom cast away
The sweetest flower that ever nature form'd.

Sif. Reproach me not—commiserate a wretch
On whom Affliction lays her iron hand!
That flower, which look'd so beauteous to the sense,
Ran wild, grew ranker than a common weed.

Beauf. sen. It is not—cannot be! Have I not known,
Even from her earliest childhood, known her heart?
Known it the seat of tenderness and truth?
Her thoughts were ever pure as virgin snows
From heaven descending: and that modest blush,
Display'd on her fair cheek, was virtue's guard.
She could not fall thus low—my child is wrong'd!
Ask thine own heart—recall her blameless life,
Was she not all a parent's fondest wish—

Sif. Call not to my distracted mind how good,
How bright she once appear'd. Time was indeed,
When blest in her chaste love, I fondly thought
My soul possess'd of all that earth held fair
And amiable: but memory of past bliss
Augments the bitter pangs of present wo!
Is she not chang'd—fallen—lost?

Beauf. sen. Patience, my son,
Compose the tempest of thy grief. Just heaven
Will doubtless soon reveal the hidden deeds
Of guilt and shame. If thy unhappy wife
Thus wanton in the paths of vice hath stray'd—
I would not rashly curse my darling child—
Yet hear me, righteous Heaven! May infamy,
Disease, and beggary embitter all
Her wretched life! But my undoubting heart,
In full conviction of her spotless truth,
Acquits her of all crime.

Sif. Is it no crime,
That listening to a vile seducer's voice,
She leaves her husband's house—her dearest friends?
Flies with her paramour to foreign climes,
A willing exile? Damn'd adult'ress! What,
Are these no crimes?

Beauf. sen. Suppress thy rage. They are:
But is she guilty? Art thou well inform'd
They went together? How doth it appear?
Who saw them? Where? Alas! thy headlong rage
Was too impatient to permit enquiry.

Sif. Were they not missing both? both at one hour?
Say, for thou hast enquir'd; is Paulet found?

Beauf. sen. He is not: but my son perhaps, whom zeal
To clear a much-lov'd sister's injur'd fame
Eager impels to strictest inquisition,
May bring some tidings.
Sif. May kind Heaven direct
His steps where lurks their covert shame from day,
And from my just revenge!
Beauf. sen. Still, still thy rage,
With weak, precarious inference, concludes
Their unprov'd guilt. Be calm, and answer me.
Think'st thou thy wife, if bent on loose designs,
Would madly join an infant in her flight,
To impede her steps, and aggravate her shame?
Sif. O my confusion! where, where is my child?
Alas, I had forgot the harmless innocent!—
Bring to my arms the poor deserted babe!
He knows no crime, and guiltless of offence
Shall put his little hands into my breast,
And ease a father's bosom of its sorrows.
Beauf. sen. Unhappy man! that comfort is denied thee.
Sif. What means my father? Speak—yet ah, take heed!
My heart already is too deeply pierc'd,
To bear another wound—What of my child?
Beauf. sen. That he's the partner of his mother's flight,
Should calm, not raise the tempest of thy grief—
For proves it not by consequence direct,
Some secret injury, not guilt, hath driven
My hapless daughter from her husband's roof?
Sif. What injury, what crime could love like mine
Commit against her? Was she not more dear,
More precious to my heart, than the warm flood
Which feeds its vital motion?
Beauf. sen. Ev'n that love,
If open to the tales of calumny,
Might wound her virtue with unjust suspicion.
Besides, to rashness and credulity
Shadows are dæmons, and a weak surmise
Authentic proof. Who's her accuser?
Sif. One
Whose taintless honour, and unshaken truth,
Have oft been try'd, and ever stood approv'd.
He, sir, whose friendship, with reluctant grief,
At length disclos'd my shame, was honest Glanville:
Report from vulgar breath I had despis'd.
Beauf. sen. So may high Heaven deal mercy to my child,
As I believe him treacherous and base.

Enter BEAUFORT *Junior.*

Beauf. sen. Here comes my son—What means this look of terror?
Beauf. jun. I fear, my father, some dread mischief—Ha!—
Is he return'd!—Now may the powers avert
This dire suspicion that strikes through my heart!
Tell, I conjure thee tell me—where's my sister?
Thou hast not murder'd her!
Sif. Good Heaven! what mean
My brother's dreadful words? Murder my wife!
Speak, quickly speak!—My heart shrinks up with horror!
Whence are thy apprehensions?
Beauf. sen. My dear son,
Keep not thy father on the rack of doubt,
But speak thy fears.
Beauf. jun. What fate may have befallen
My injur'd sister, Heaven and thou best know—
But Paulet, whom thy fierce revenge pursu'd,
This night is murder'd.
Sif. Ha! what say'st thou?—Paulet!
Is Paulet dead? How know'st thou he is murder'd?
Beauf. jun. In the dark path which to the cloister leads,
His sword is found, and bloody marks appear,
That speak the deed too plain.
Sif. But where's my wife?
Was not she with him? Went they not together?
Beauf. jun. Together! no. The villain Glanville's false!
My sister is traduc'd.
Sif. False! Glanville false!—
What!—Paulet murder'd!—and my wife traduc'd!
Rack me, ye furies! tear me joint from joint!
Your pangs are nothing—I have done a deed,
No tortures can atone! Tremendous Power!
What tempest wrapt in darkness now prepares
To burst on my devoted head! What crime
Unknown, or unrepented, points me out,
The mark distinguish'd of peculiar vengeance?
Why turns the gracious all-benignant eye
Averse from me? O guide my steps to find
Where lurks this hidden mischief—
Beauf. jun. Lurks it not
In thine own breast?
Beauf. sen. My son, forbear.
Sif. Art thou,
My brother, so unkind! Would I have stabb'd
Thy heart, when breaking with convulsive pangs
Of dreadful doubt?—But I deserve unkindness—
I was unkind, was cruel to Cleone—
Yet lead me to her arms—though wrong'd, abus'd,
She, like offended Heaven, will still forgive.
My friend too, my best friend is murder'd! Oh,
What hand accurst hath wrought this web of wo?
Support me, mercy! 'tis too much, too much!
But let distraction come, and from my brain
Tear out the seat of memory, that I
No more may think, no more may be a wretch!
Beauf. sen. Be calm, my son. When Heaven's high hand afflicts,
Submission best becomes us—nor let man,
The child of weakness, murmur.
Sif. O my father!
Thee too my rashness hath undone! Thou, thou
Wilt join with Heaven to curse me! but I kiss
The rod of chastisement, and in the dust
Resign'd, a prostrate suppliant, beg for mercy.
Beauf. sen. Moderate the grief

Which thus unmans thee—Rouse thee to the search
Of these dark deeds—and Heaven direct our footsteps.
Hath not suspicion whisper'd to thy heart,
That he, this Glanville, whom thy friendship trusts
With confidence entire, may yet be false?
Sif. Till this dread hour, suspicion of his truth
Ne'er touch'd my breast—Now doubt and horror raise
Distraction in my soul.
Beauf. sen. All-gracious Power!
Look on our sorrows with a pitying eye!
My feeble heart sinks in me—But do thou
Bear up against this tide of wo: I trust,
If goodness dwell in heaven, my child is safe.
Perhaps she seeks the shelter of these arms,
And we have miss'd her in th' entangled wood.
With speed dispatch immediate messengers
Through different paths, with strictest search to trace
Cleone's steps, or find thy murder'd friend.
My son, I charge thee, see this well perform'd.
Beauf. jun. I will not fail.
[*Exit* BEAUFORT *junior.*
Beauf. sen. Mean while let us observe
Each motion, word, and look of this fell fiend;
So may we best detect him; and his schemes,
Though gloss'd with saint-like show (if much I err not,)
Will soon in all their horrors stand reveal'd.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to the Wood.*

Enter CLEONE *and her Child.*

Cle. Whence do these terrors seize my sinking heart?
Since guilt I know not, wherefore know I fear?
And yet these silent shadowy scenes awake
Strange apprehensions. Guardian powers! protect
My weakness! Hark! what noise is that?—All still.
It was but fancy.—Yet methought the howl
Of distant wolves broke on the ear of night,
Doubling the desert's horror.
Child. O I'm frighted!
Why do you speak and look so strangely at me?
Cle. I will not fright my love. Come, let's go on—
We've but a little way—Save us, ye Powers!

Enter RAGOZIN *with a Dagger, and a Mask on.*

[CLE. *flies with her child, he follows.*
Rag. Stop—for thou fly'st in vain.
Cle. [*Within the scenes.*] Help! Mercy! Save! Kill not my infant! Murder! O my child!
[*She retreats back to the Scene, and falls in a swoon.*

Re-enter RAGOZIN.

Rag. She too is dead!—I fear'd that blow was short—
But hark! what noise?—I must not be detected—
No time to bury 'em now—be that his care.—
[*Exit.*
Cle. [*Waking from her trance.*] Where have I been? What horrid hand hath stamp'd
This dreadful vision on my brain? O death!
Have I not gain'd thy mansions? Am I still
In this bad world? What ails my heart? my head?
Was not my child here with me? Sure he was—
And some foul dæmon terrifies my soul
With fears of murder. Gracious Heaven, forbid!
Conduct my steps, kind Providence, to where
My little wanderer strays, that I may know
This horror in my mind is but a dream. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to an adjoining Part of the Wood, and discovers the Child murdered.*

Enter CLEONE.

Cle. O fearful silence! Not a sound returns,
Save the wild echoes of my own sad cries,
To my affrighted ear!—My child! my child!
Where art thou wander'd—Where beyond the reach
Of thy poor mother's voice!—Yet while above
The God of justice dwells, I will not deem
The bloody vision true. Heaven hath not left me—
There truth is known, well known—and see my love!
See, where upon the bank its wearied limbs
Lie stretch'd in sleep. In sleep! O agony!
Blast not my senses with a sight like this!
'Tis blood! 'tis death! my child, my child is murder'd!
[*Falls down by her child, kissing it and weeping. Then raising herself on her arm, after a dead silence, and looking by degrees more and more wild, she proceeds in a distracted manner.*
Hark! hark! lie still, my love!—For all the world
Don't stir!—'Tis Glanville, and he'll murder us!
Stay, stay—I'll cover thee with boughs—don't fear—
I'll call the little lambs, and they shall bring
Their softest fleece to shelter thee from cold.
There, there—lie close—he shall not see—no, no;
I'll tell him 'tis an angel I have hid.
[*She rises up.*
Where is he? soft!—he's gone, he's gone, my love,
And shall not murder thee.—Poor innocent!
'Tis fast asleep. Well thought! I'll steal away,
Now while he slumbers—pick wild berries for him,
And bring a little water in my hand—
Then, when he wakes, we'll seat us on the bank,
And sing all night. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* SIFROY'S *House.*

GLANVILLE, *and* ISABELLA.

Glan. Betray'd! by whom betray'd? By thy vain fear.
How curs'd is he who treads on danger's path,
Entangled with a woman! Fool! alone
I had been safe.
Isab. Yet hear me—On my life,
No word from me hath 'scaped. We may perchance
Be yet secure.
Glan. Perchance! And do our lives
Depend on fickle chance? But speak—proceed—
Whence are thy fears?
Isab. In close concealment hid,
This moment I o'erheard a whisper'd scheme
Of seizing thee.
Glan. Confusion! Can it be?
Can Ragozin, the villain, have betray'd me?
Isab. I fear he hath. Where is he?
Glan. Not return'd
From Baden wood, to ascertain the deed
That crowns our business. Were but that secure,
My tortur'd soul, torn on the rack of doubt,
Might yet feel peace. How wears the time?
Isab. Two hours
Are wanting yet to midnight.
Glan. Where's Sifroy?
Isab. With Beaufort. But perplexing doubts distract
His reason, that all power to act forsakes him.
Still farther to alarm—deep-stain'd with gore,
The sword of Paulet's found, and other marks
That speak him murder'd.
Glan. That's beyond my wish:
And tells but what I wanted to proclaim.
Isab. Proclaim! What mean'st thou? Doth it not conduce
To our detection? Doth it not confirm
Their dark suspicions?
Glan. The short line, alas,
Of thy weak thought, in vain would sound the depth
Of my designs. But rest thee well assur'd,
I have foreseen, and am prepar'd to meet
All possible events.
Isab. O grant, good Heaven—
Great God! how dreadful 'tis to be engag'd
In what we dare not pray that Heaven may prosper!
Glan. Curse on thy boding tongue! Let me not hear
Its superstitious weakness—Hush! who comes?
No more—'tis Ragozin—Now sleep distrust.
First let me learn if he hath done the deed;
If not, I am betray'd, and will awake
In vengeance on his falsehood.

Enter RAGOZIN.

Glan. Speak, my friend—
Cleone and her child—say quickly—how disposed?
Rag. To heav'n remov'd, no longer they obstruct
Our views on earth.
Glan. Speak plainly—are they dead?
Rag. Both dead.
Glan. Swear, swear to this! And by all hope
Of that reward which urg'd thee to the deed,
Swear thou hast not betray'd me!
Rag. Whence arise
These base suspicions? I disdain that crime!
Though branded with the name of an assassin,
I am not yet so mean as to betray.
Glan. Distraction!—may I trust thee?
Rag. As thou wilt.
Glan. [*Pausing.*] It must be so—we still are safe: and this
Pretence of strong suspicion is no more
Than subtile artifice, contriv'd to draw
Th' unwary to confession.
Rag. 'Tis no more.
Glan. Nor will I more than with a just contempt
Regard it. All our deeds of blood are done.
What now remains, the law shall execute.
Rag. What's thy intent?
Glan. The thrust thus aim'd at me,
Shall deeply pierce Sifroy's unguarded bosom.
Thy aid once more, as witness to his threats.
Rag. Freely I would, but safety now requires
That I abscond. The stipulated sum,
Forgive me therefore, if I claim this night.
Glan. 'Tis thine. But hark!—retire—I hear his step—
One moment wait—at his return, 'tis thine.
Rag. [*Aside.*] Curs'd chance! Were I possess'd of my reward,
Who would might wait thee now—nor will I more
Than some short moments rest unsatisfied.
[*Exit.*

Enter SIFROY.

Sif. [*Not seeing* GLAN.] O happiness! thou frail, thou fading flower,
Whose culture mocks all human toil, farewell!
But I, blind madman! by the roots have pluck'd
Thy sweetness from my bosom. My dear love!
Where wanders now thy wrong'd, thy helpless virtue?
On what cold stone reclines thy drooping head,
While trickling tears call thy Sifroy inhuman?
Deluded wretch! why did my greedy ear
Catch the rank poison of suspicion's breath,
And to my tortur'd brain convey distraction?
Glan. [*Advancing to him.*] Are thus my faithful services repaid?
Are the plain truths my undisguising heart

In friendship told, already deem'd no more
Than vile suggestions of designing falsehood?
Sif. Villain, they are!—Thou know'st them false as hell!
Where is my wife?—O traitor, thou hast plung'd
My soul into perdition?
Glan. Rather say,
That he who led astray the willing wife,
Thy folly doats on—he—
Sif. Blasphemer! stop
Thy impious tongue! The breast of that dear saint
Enshrines a soul as spotless as her form.
Said'st thou not, slanderer! that my love was fled
With Paulet?
Glan. True: I did.
Sif. Art thou not sure
That this is false? Hast thou no dreadful cause
To know it cannot be?
Glan. None. Thou, perhaps,
Whose bloody errand I indeed have heard
Already is accomplish'd—thou, 'tis true,
May'st know that they are parted: 'twas the deed
Thou flew'st thus swiftly to perform. But how
Doth that impeach the truth of her elopement?
That thou hast murder'd him, acquits not her.
Sif. That I have murder'd!—I!—Pernicious wretch!
What dark design, by blackest fiends inspir'd,
Lurks in thy treacherous soul? Tremendous Power!
Have I then sinn'd beyond all hope of mercy?
Must the deep phial of thy vengeance, pour'd
On my devoted head, be pour'd from him?
But all thy ways are just! To him I gave
That credit which I ow'd my injur'd love—
He now, by thy supreme decree, stands forth
The avenger of my crime.

Enter BEAUFORT *Senior, Officers, &c.*

Beauf. sen. Seize there your victim.
Glan. What means this outrage?—Upon what pretence—
Beauf. sen. The bloody hand of murder points out thee
To strong suspicion. Turn'st thou pale?—O wretch!
Thy guilt drinks up thy blood.
Glan. Not guilt, but rage!
Who dares accuse me?
Beauf. sen. I. Where's Paulet? where
My daughter? who thou basely said'st were fled
Together?
Glan. That his poniard found the way
To part their steps, impeaches not my truth.
Beauf. sen. His poniard!
Glan. His. I should have scorn'd to charge
The man, whose honour I think deeply wrong'd;
But my own life attempted thus, demands
That truth should rise to light. Cam'st thou not here,
Driven by the fury of a dire revenge?
What other motive urg'd thy desperate haste?
Sif. Insidious slave! hast thou ensnar'd my soul
By treacherous arts?—Hast thou with falsehood vile
Inflam'd this hapless breast?—And would'st thou now
Infer my guilt, from my provok'd resentment?
Glan. Lean'd I on feeble inference—I would ask,
What cause have I to seek this Paulet's blood?
'Twas not my wife, my daughter he seduc'd!
How has he injur'd me? But I reject
These trivial pleas—I build on certain proof.
Beauf. sen. What proof?
Glan. The strongest—his own hand and seal
Fixt to the firm resolve, that he alone
[*Shewing the letter.*
Would do the righteous deed—for so his rage
Calls Paulet's murder.
Beauf. sen. Ha! What can I think!
Unhappy man! and hast thou to the crime
Of rash suspicion, added that of murder?
Sif. My father, hear thy son; I plead not for
My life, but justice.—That I am a wretch,
Groaning beneath the weight of Heaven's just ire—
That snared and caught in meditated wiles,
I banish'd from my house a guiltless wife—
That burning with revenge, I flew to quench
My wrath in Paulet's blood—all this I own.
But by the sacred eye of Providence!
That views each human step, and still detects
The murderer's deed; of this imputed crime
My heart is ignorant, my hands are clear.
Beauf. sen. I wish thee innocent—
Glan. Have then my words
No weight? and is his own attesting hand
No proof against him? Is her secret flight
An accident? No more—O partial man!
To hide thy daughter's shame, thou seek'st my life.
But I appeal from thee to public justice.
Beauf. sen. To that thou art consign'd: and may the hand
Of strict inquiry drag to open day
All secret guilt, though shame indelible
Should brand a daughter nearest to my heart.
Heaven aid my search! I seek not blood, but truth.
Guard safe your prisoner to the magistrate,
I'll follow you. The justice thou demand'st,
Thou shalt not want.
Glan. 'Tis well: I ask no more.
Let Ragozin, let Isabella too
Attend the magistrate—on them I call
To clear my slander'd name.
Beauf. sen. It shall be so.
Take them this instant to your strictest care.
Thou too, Sifroy, be ready to attend.
Sif. O think not I will leave him, till full proof
Condemn him or acquit.
Beauf. sen. The cause demands it.
[*Exeunt Officers with* GLANVILLE *guarded.*
Sif. Whence has the miscreant this unusual firmness?
Can guilt be free from terror?
Beauf. sen. No, my son:

And through the mask of smooth hypocrisy,
Methinks I see conceal'd a trembling heart.
If he be true, my daughter must be false:
If he be guiltless, who hath murder'd Paulet?
Sif. There, there, thank Heaven! my hands are innocent.
But oh, my love!—Conduct me where she strays
Forlorn and comfortless! Alas, who knows—
Her tender heart perhaps this moment breaks
With my unkindness! Wretch! what hast thou lost!

Enter BEAUFORT *Junior.*

Beauf. jun. Thy soul's sweet peace!—Never, no never more
To be regain'd!—Shame, anguish, and despair
Shall haunt thy future hours! Severe remorse
Shall strike his vulture talons through thy heart,
And rend thy vital threads.
Beauf. sen. What means my son?
Sif. My brother!—If I may conjure thee yet
By that dear name,—
Beauf. jun. Thou may'st not—I disclaim it.
Sif. Why dost thou still alarm my shuddering soul
With rising terrors?
Beauf. sen. My dear son, relieve
Thy father from this dread suspence!
Beauf. jun. O sir! how shall I speak! or in what words
Unfold the horrors of this night?—My sister—
Lost to her wretched self—through dreary wilds
Wanders distracted—void of reason's light
To guide her devious feet.
Beauf. sen. Support me, Heaven!
Then every hope is fled!—Thy will be done!—
Where is my child? Where was she found?
Beauf. jun. Alas!
Of soul too delicate, too soft to bear
Unjust reproach, and undeserved shame,
Distraction seiz'd her in the gloom of night,
As passing through the wood she sought the arms
Of a protecting father.
Sif. Do I live?
Is such a wretch permitted still to breathe?
Why opens not this earth? Why sleeps above
The lightning's vengeful blast? Is Heaven unjust?
Or am I still reserv'd for deeper wo?
I hope not mercy—that were impious—
Pour then on my bare head, ye ministers
Of wrath! your hottest vengeance—
Beauf. jun. Stop—forbear—
Nor imprecate that vengeance, which unseen
Already hangs o'er thy devoted life.
Thou know'st not yet the measure of thy wo.
Thy child, thy lovely babe, a bloody corse,
Lies breathless by his frantic mother's side—
Much to be fear'd, by her own hand destroy'd,
When reason in her brain had lost dominion.
Sif. My child too gone!—Then misery is complete—
O my torn heart!—Is there in heaven no pity?
None, none for me! The wrongs of all I lov'd
To heaven ascending, bar th' eternal gates,
And close the ear of mercy 'gainst my prayer.
But fate's last bolt is thrown, and I am curst
Beyond all power to sharpen torture's pang.
Yes, I am scorn'd, abandon'd, and cast out
By heaven and earth!—I must not call thee father—
I have undone thee, robb'd thee of the name,
And now, myself am childless, and undone.
Beauf. sen. Forbear, my son, to aggravate thy grief,
Already too severe. Kind Providence
May yet restore, and harmonize her mind.
Sif. May Heaven pour blessings on thy reverend head
For that sweet hope! but say, where shall I see her?—
How bear the dreadful sight!
Beauf. jun. Dreadful indeed!
On the cold earth they found her laid: her head,
Supported on her arm, hung o'er her child,
The image of pale grief, lamenting innocence.
Sometimes she speaks fond words, and seems to smile
On the dead babe as 'twere alive.—Now, like
The melancholy bird of night, she pours
A soft and melting strain, as if to sooth
Its slumbers: and now clasps it to her breast,
Cries, Glanville is not here—fear not, my love,
He shall not come—Then wildly throws her eyes
Around, and in the tenderest accent calls
Aloud on thee, to save her from dishonour!
Sif. Haste, let us haste—distracted thus, she grows
Still dearer, still more precious to my soul!
O let me sooth her sorrows into peace.
Beauf. sen. Stay—calls she frequently on Glanville's name?
Beauf. jun. So they report who found her.
Beauf. sen. Left they her
Alone?
Beauf. jun. No: but all arts to court her thence were vain.
Beauf. sen. Thither with speed this moment let us fly.
Let Glanville too attend. From the wild words
Of madness and delirium, he who struck
From darkness light—may call discovery forth,
To guide our footsteps.
Beauf. jun. Just is your resolve,
And I will follow you—but have receiv'd
Intelligence of Paulet that imports us.
Sif. Of Paulet! of my friend! What may it be?
Beauf. jun. As yet I'm ignorant.
Beauf. sen. To gain us light,
Be no means left untried. [*Exit* BEAUF. *jun.*
Sif. But haste, we linger.
Yet whither can I fly? where seek for peace?
In its most tender vein my heart is wounded!
Had I been smote in any other part,
I could have borne with firmness; but in thee,
My wrong'd, my ruin'd love, I bleed to death.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Wood. CLEONE *is discovered siting by her dead child; over whom she hath form'd a little bower of shrubs and branches of trees. She seems very busy in picking little sprigs from a bough in her hand.*

CLEONE *sings.*

Sweeter than the damask rose
Was his lovely breast;
There, O let me there repose,
Sigh, sigh, and sink to rest.

Did I not love him? who can say I did not?
My heart was in his bosom, but he tore
It out, and cast it from him—Yet I lov'd—
And he more lovely seem'd to that fond heart,
Than the bright cherub sailing on the skirts
Of yonder cloud, th' inhabitant of heaven.

Enter SIFROY, BEAUFORT *Senior*, ISABELLA, GLANVILLE, RAGOZIN, *Officers, &c.*

Beauf. sen. This is the place—And see my hapless child!
Why, gracious Heaven! why have I liv'd to feel
This dreadful moment? Soft I pray ye tread—
And let us well observe her speech and action.
Sif. Have I done this!—and do I live!—My heart
Drops blood! but to thy guidance I will bend,
And in forc'd silence smother killing grief.
Glan. [*Aside.*] Did'st thou not tell me, villain, she was dead?
Rag. [*Aside.*] I was deceiv'd—by Heav'n, I thought her so.
Glan. [*Aside.*] May hell reward thee!
Beauf. sen. Stay—she rises—hush!
Cle. Soft! soft! he stirs—
O, I have wak'd him—I have wak'd my child!
And when false Glanville knows it, he again
Will murder him.
Beauf. sen. Mark that!
Glan. And are the words
Of incoherent madness to convict me?
Sif. They are the voice of Heaven, detecting murder!
Yes, villain! thy infernal aim appears.
Cle. No, no; all still—As undisturb'd he sleeps
As the stolen infant rock'd in th' eagle's nest.
I'll call the red-breast, and the nightingale,
Their pious bills once cover'd little babes,
And sung their dying dirge. Again, sweet birds!
Again pour forth your melancholy notes,
And sooth once more that innocence ye love.
Sif. On that enchanting voice, how my fond heart
Hath hung with rapture!—now too deeply pierc'd,
I die upon the sound. [*He advances towards her.*
My dearest love,
Behold thy own Sifroy, return'd to calm
Thy griefs! and pour into thy wounded mind
The healing balm of tenderness!
Cle. [*Frighted and trembling.*] Sweet Heaven,
Protect me! O, if you have pity, save
My infant!—Cast away that bloody steel!
And on my knees I'll kiss the gentle hand
That spar'd my child!—Glanville shall never know
But we are dead.—In this lone wood we'll live,
And I no more will seek my husband's house.
And yet I never wrong'd him! never indeed!
Sif. I know thou didst not—Look upon me, love!
Dost thou not know me? I am thy Sifroy—
Thy husband—Do not break my heart—O speak!
That look will kill me!
Beauf. sen. My dear child! Look up—
Look on thy father! Am I too forgotten?
Is every filial trace in thy poor brain
Defac'd—She knows us not!—May Heaven, my son,
Lend thee its best support! For me—my days
Are few; nor can my sorrows' date be long
Protracted.
Sif. Say not so! Must I become
The murderer of all I hold most dear!
Cle. Yes—yes—a husband once—a father too
I had—but lost, quite lost—deep in my brain
Buried they lie——In heaps of rolling sand—
I cannot find them.
Sif. O heart-rending grief!
How is that fair, that amiable mind,
Disjointed, blasted by the fatal rage
Of one rash moment!
[*She goes to her child, he follows.*
Let sweet pity veil
The horrors of this scene from every eye!
My child! my child! hide, hide me from that sight! [*Turns away.*
Cle. Stay, stay——for you are good, and will not hurt
My lamb. Alas, you weep,—why should you weep?
I am his mother, yet I cannot weep.
Have you more pity than a mother feels?
But I shall weep no more——my heart is cold.
Sif. [*Falling on his knees.*] O mitigate thy wrath, good Heaven! Thou know'st
My weakness—lay not on thy creature more
Than he can bear: Restore her, O restore!
But if it must not be—if I am doom'd
To stand a dreadful warning to deter
Frail man from sudden rage—Almighty Power,
Then take, in mercy take, this wretched life!
[*As he rises,* ISABELLA *comes forward, and throws herself at his feet.*

Isab. Hear, hear me, sir; my very heart is pierc'd!
And my shock'd soul, beneath a load of guilt,
Sinks down in terrors unsupportable.
'Tis Heaven impels me to reveal the crimes,
In which a fatal passion has involv'd me.
Protect me, save me from his desperate rage!
[GLANVILLE *suddenly pulls out a short dagger which he had concealed in his bosom; and attempts to stab her. One of the Officers wrenches it from him.*
Beauf. sen. Ha! seize the dagger!
Sif. Hold thy murderous hand!
Rag. [*Aside.*] All is betray'd—for me no safety now,
But sudden flight. [*He endeavours to withdraw.*
Sif. Stop—seize—detain that slave!
The attempt to fly bespeaks him an accomplice.
[*He is seized by the Officers.*
Isab. [*To* GLAN.] Tremble, O wretch! Thou seest that Heaven is just,
Nor suffers even ourselves to hide our deeds.
To death I yield—nor hope, nor wish for life—
Permit me to reveal some dreadful truths,
And I shall die content. Thy hapless wife,
Chaste as the purest angel of the sky,
By Glanville is traduc'd—by him betray'd—
Paulet is murder'd—and by his device,
The lovely child. Seduc'd by his vile arts,
And by the flattering hopes of wealth ensnar'd,
Distracting thought! I have destroy'd my soul.
Beauf. sen. Why, why so far from virtue didst thou stray,
That to compassionate thy wretched fate,
Almost is criminal?
[*To* GLAN.] But canst thou bear—
Can thy hard heart support this dreadful scene!
Glan. I know the worst, and am prepar'd to meet it.
That wretch hath seal'd my death. And had I but
Aveng'd her timorous perfidy—the rest
I'd leave to fate; and neither should lament
My own, nor pity yours.
Sif. Inhuman savage!
But justice shall exert her keenest scourge,
And wake to terror thy unfeeling heart.
Guard them to safe confinement.—Killing sight!
Behold that piteous object!—Her dumb grief
Speaks to my heart unutterable woe!
Horror is in her silence—[*He goes to her.*] My dear love!
Look, look upon me! Let these tears prevail,
And with thy reason, wake thy pity too.
Cle. Again you weep—But had you lost a wife,
As I a husband, you might weep indeed!
Or had you lost so sweet a boy as mine,
'Twould break your heart!
Sif. Her words are pointed steel!
Have I not lost a wife?—lost a sweet boy?
Indeed I have!—Myself too murder'd them.
Cle. That was unkind—Why did you so?—But hush!
Let no one talk of murder—I was kill'd—
My husband murder'd me—but I forgave him,
Sif. I cannot, cannot bear!—O torture, torture!
Beauf. sen. Collect thyself, and with the humble eye
Of patient hope, look up to Heaven resign'd.
Sif. Hope! where is hope!—Alas, no hope for me!
On downy pinions, lo! to heaven she flies—
To realms of bliss—where I must never come!
Terrors are mine—and from the depths below,
Despair looks out, and beckons me to sink.
Beauf. sen. Assuage thy grief, call reason to thy aid,
Perhaps we yet may save her precious life;
At least delay not, by some gentle means,
To sooth her to return.
Sif. May soft persuasion dwell upon thy lips!
But ah, can tears or arguments avail,
When reason marks not?

Enter BEAUFORT *Junior.*

Beauf. jun. Where, where is my sister?
Beauf. sen. Alas! the melancholy sight will pierce
Thy inmost soul!—But do not yet disturb her.
Distraction o'er her memory hangs a cloud,
That hides us from her.
Sif. My dearest brother, can thy heart receive
The wretch, who robb'd it of a sister's love?
Beauf. jun. I do forgive thee all——Alas, my brother!
Most basely wert thou wrong'd. But truth is found—
Paulet, though wounded, yet escap'd with life.
Sif. Then Heaven is just—But tell me, how escap'd—
Beauf. jun. Thou shalt know all—But stay! my sister speaks—
Cle. [*Coming forward.*] O who hath done it! who hath done this deed
Of death?—My child is murder'd—my sweet babe
Bereft of life!—Thou Glanville! thou art he!
Remorseless fiend! destroy a child, an infant!—
Monster, forbear!——See, see the little heart
Bleeds on his dagger's point!
[*Looking down to the earth.*
But lo! the furies!—the black fiends of hell
Have seiz'd the murderer! look, they tear his heart—
That heart which had no pity! Hark, he shrieks,
His eye-balls glare—his teeth together gnash
In bitterness of anguish—while the fiends
Scream in his frighted ear—*Thou shalt not murder!*
Beauf. sen. What dreadful visions terrify her brain!
To interrupt her must relieve.—Speak to her.
Sif. My dearest love!—cast but one look upon us!
Cle. [*Looking up to heaven.*] Is that my infant?—Whither do ye bear
My bleeding babe! Not yet. O mount not yet,
Ye sons of light, but take me on your wings,
With my sweet innocent—I come, I come!
[*Her father and brother take hold of her.*

Yet hold; where is my husband—my Sifroy?
Will not he follow? Will he quite forsake
His poor lost wife?—O tell him I was true!
[*Swoons.*
Beauf. sen. Alas, she faints!—I fear the hand of death
Is falling on her. Gently bear her up.
Sif. O God! my heart—
My heart-strings break!—Did not her dying words
Dwell on my name? Did not her latest sigh
Breathe tenderness for me?—for me, the wretch,
Whose rash suspicion, whose intemperate rage,
Abandon'd her to shame!—Ha! gracious Heaven!
Does she not move? Does not returning light
Dawn in her feeble eye? Her opening lips
Breathe the sweet hope of life.
Cle. Where have I been?
What dreadful dreams have floated in my brain!
Beauf. sen. How fares my child?
Cle. O faint! exceeding faint!
My father!—my dear father!—Do I wake?
And am I, am I in a father's arms?
My brother too! O happy!
Beauf. jun. My dear sister!
Sif. Transporting rapture! Will my love return
To life, to reason too? indulgent Power!
Cle. What sound, what well-known voice is that I hear!
Support me, raise me to his long-lost arms!
It is my husband! my Sifroy! my love!
Alas, too faint—I never more shall rise.
Sif. Ah! do not wound me, do not pierce my heart
With any thought so dreadful. Art thou given
In mockery only to my longing arms?
Raise up thy head, my love, lean on my breast,
And whisper to my soul thou wilt not die.
Cle. How thy sweet accents sooth the pangs of death!
Witness, ye angels, thus in thy dear arms
To die, my faithful love, and spotless truth
Confirm'd, was all my wish! Where is my father?
Let me but take his blessings up to heaven,
And I shall go with confidence.
Beauf. sen. My child—
My darling child!—May that pure bliss, just heaven
Bestows upon departed saints, be thine!
Cle. Farewell, my brother! comfort and support
Our father's feeble age—To heal his grief
Will give thy sister's dying moments ease.
Sif. Talk not of death!—We must not, must not part!
Good Heaven, her dying agonies approach.
Cle. The keenest pang of death, is that I feel
For thy surviving woe. Adieu, my love!
I do entreat thee with my last, last breath,
Restrain thy tears—nor let me grieve to think
Thou feel'st a pain I cannot live to cure.
Sif. Might'st thou but live, how light were every pain
Fate could inflict!
Cle. It will not be!—I faint—
My spirits fail—farewell—receive me, Heaven.
[*Dies.*
Sif. She's gone!—for ever gon!—Those lovely eyes
Are clos'd in death—no more to look on me!
My fate is fix'd, and in this tortur'd breast
Anguish—remorse—despair—must ever dwell.
Beauf. sen. Offended power, at length with pitying eyes
Look on our misery! Cut short this thread,
That links my soul too long to wretched life!
And let mankind, taught by his hapless fate,
Learn one great truth, experience finds too late;
That dreadful ills from rash resentment flow,
And sudden passions end in lasting woe.
[*Exeunt.*

EPILOGUE.

BY WILLIAM SHENSTONE.——SPOKEN BY MRS BELLAMY.

WELL, ladies—so much for the tragic stile—
And now, the custom is, to make you smile.
" To make us smile, I hear Flippanta say,
" Yes—we have smil'd indeed—through half the play:
" We always laugh when bards, demure and sly,
" Bestow such mighty pains—to make us cry.
" And truly, to bring sorrow to a crisis,
" Mad-folks, and murder'd babes are—shrew'd devices.
" The captain gone three years—and then to blame
" The vestal conduct of his virtuous dame!—
" What French, what English bride would think it treason,
" When thus accus'd—to give the brute some reason?
" Out of my house—this night, forsooth—depart!
" A modern wife had said—With all my heart:
" But think not, haughty sir, I'll go alone,

" Order your coach—conduct me safe to town—
" Give me my jewels—wardrobe—and my maid,
" And pray take care my pin-money be paid:
" Else know, I wield a pen—and, for his glory,
" My dear's domestic feats may shine in story!
" Then for the child—the tale was truly sad—
" But who for such a bantling would run mad?
" What wife, at midnight hour inclin'd to roam,
" Would fondly drag her little chit from home?
" What has a mother with her child to do?
" Dear brats—the nursery's the place for you."
Such are the strains of many a modish fair!
Yet memoires—not of modern growth—declare
The time has been, when modesty and truth
Were deem'd additions to the charms of youth;
Ere, in the dice-box, ladies found delight,
Or swoon'd, for lack of cards, on Sunday-night;
When women hid their necks, and veil'd their faces,
Nor romp'd, nor rak'd, nor star'd, at public places:
Nor took the airs of Amazons—for graces!
When plain domestic virtues were the mode,
And wives ne'er dreamt of happiness abroad,
But cheer'd their offspring, shunn'd fantastic airs,
And, with the joys of wedlock, mixt the cares.
Such modes are past—yet sure they merit praise;
For marriage triumph'd in those wassel days:
No virgin sigh'd in vain, no fears arose,
Lest holy wars should cause a dearth of beaux:
By chaste decorum, each affection gain'd;
By faith and fondness, what she won, maintain'd.
'Tis yours, ye fair! to mend a thoughtless age,
That scorns the press, the pulpit, and the stage.
To yield frail husbands no pretence to stray,
(Men will be rakes, if women lead the way.)
To sooth—But truce with these preceptive lays!
The muse, who, dazzled with your ancient praise,
On present worth, and modern beauty tramples,
Must own, she ne'er could boast more bright examples.*

* Addressing the Boxes.

THE

ORPHAN OF CHINA.

BY

MURPHY.

PROLOGUE.

BY W. WHITEHEAD.

ENOUGH of Greece and Rome. The exhausted store,
Of either nation, now can charm no more:
Even adventitious helps in vain we try,
Our triumphs languish in the public eye;
And grave processions, musically slow,
Here pass unheeded—as a Lord Mayor's shew.
On eagle wings, the poet of to-night,
Soars for fresh virtues to the source of light,
To China's eastern realms; and boldly bears
Confucius' morals to Britannia's ears.
Accept th' imported boon, as echoing Greece
Received from wand'ring chiefs her golden fleece;
Nor only richer by the spoils become,
But praise th'advent'rous youth who brings them home.
One dubious character, we own, he draws,
A patriot, zealous in a monarch's cause!
Vice is the task the varying hand to guide,
And teach the blending colours to divide;
Where, rainbow-like, th' encroaching tints invade
Each other's bounds, and mingle light with shade.
If then, assiduous to obtain his end,
You find too far the subject's zeal extend;
If undistinguished loyalty prevails,
Where nature shrinks, and strong affection fails,
On China's tenets charge the fond mistake,
And spare his error for his virtue's sake.
From noble motives our allegiance springs,
For Britain knows no right divine in kings.
From Freedom's choice that boasted right arose,
And through each line from Freedom's choice it flows.
Justice, with mercy joined, the throne maintains;
And in his people's hearts, our monarch reigns.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

TIMURKAN, *Emperor of the Tartars.*
OCTAR, *a Tartar General.*
ZAMTI, *a Mandarin.*
ETAN, *educated as his Son.*
HAMET, *a youthful Captive, Son to Zamti.*
MORAT, *a faithful Friend of Zamti.*
MIRVAN, *a Chinese in the Tartar's Service, secretly a Friend of Zamti.*
ORASMING, ZIMVENTI, } *two Conspirators.*

WOMEN.

MANDANE, *Zamti's Wife.*

Messenger, Guards, &c.

SCENE,—*Pekin, Capital of China.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter MANDANE *and* MIRVAN.

Man. No, never; Mirvan, never—still this heart
Must throb with ceaseless woe——All-gracious Heaven!
Will not this palace, drenched in gore; the crown
Of China's kings fixed on the Tartar's brow;
Will not a track of twenty years in bondage;
Ah! will not these suffice, without a fresh cause
Of bitter anguish in Mandane's breast?—
Mir. Better suppress these unavailing tears,
This fruitless flood of grief.
Man. It will not be———
Even 'midst the horrors of this dismal hour,
When fate has all transferred from lost Cathai
To vile barbarian hands;—in such an hour,
This heart, revolting from the public cause,
Bleeds from a private source; bleeds for the woes
That hang o'er Zamti's house.
Mir. Alas! Mandane,
Amidst the general wreck who does not feel
The keen domestic pang?
Man. Yes, all.—We all
Must feel the kindred-touch; daily the cries
Of widows, orphans, father, son, and brother,
In vain are sent to heaven;—the wasteful rage
Of these barbarians—these accursed invaders,
Burns with increasing fire;—the thunder still
Rolls o'er our heads, threatening with hideous crash
To fall at once, and bury us in ruin.
Mir. And quickly fall it must!—the hand of heaven
Weighs this great empire down.
Man. Nay, tax not Heaven!
Almighty Justice never bares its arm
'Gainst innocence and truth. 'Tis Timurkan,
That fell barbarian—that insatiate waster——
May curses blast the Tartar!—he—'Tis he
Has bore down all, and still his slaughtering sword,
In yonder field of death, where Corea's troops
Made their last stand for liberty and China,
Crimsons the land with blood. This battle lost,
Oh! then farewell to all!—But, Mirvan, say,
How came the tidings?
Mir. From yon lofty tower,
As my eyes, straining toward the distant plain,
Sent forth an anxious look, through clouds of dust
The savage bands appeared; the western sun
Gleam'd on their burnished helms; and soon a shout
From the glad multitude proclaimed the approach
Of Timurkan:—elated with new conquest,
The tyrant comes, and where his wrath will stop
Heaven only knows!
Man. Oh! there—there lies the thought
At which imagination starts, appalled
With horror at the scene her busy workings
Have coloured to my sight——there lies the thought
That wakens all a mother's fears—alas!
I tremble for my son!
Mir. Your son—kind Heaven!
Have you not check'd his ardour?—with your tears,
Your soft authority, restrained the hero
From the alarms of war?
Man. Alas, good Mirvan,
Thou little know'st his danger!—but that truth
Must never pass these lips.
Mir. I hope, Mandane
Doubts not my honest zeal—full well you know
I bear this tyrant deep and mortal hate;
That under him I list, and wear this garb,
In hopes that some occasion may arrive,
When I may strike an unexpected blow,
And do my country right.
Man. Thy loyalty,
Thy truth and honour have been ever spotless.
Besides thy wrongs, thy countless wrongs, the wounds
He gave your injured family and name——
Mir. Alas! those wounds must still lie bleeding here,
Untented by the hand of time—Not all
His lenient arts, his favours heaped upon me,
Shall cool the burning anguish of my soul.
What! he that slew my father!—dragged my sister,
Blooming in years, to his detested bed!—
Yes, tyrant, yes:—thy unextinguished foe
Dwells in this bosom. Surely, then, to me
Mandane may reveal her griefs—her wrongs
Will add new fuel to my hidden fires,
And make them burn more fiercely.
Man. Urge no more—
My woes must rest concealed. Yet should the tyrant
Learn from the captives of yon vanquished host,
That China's orphan breathes the vital air,
And, to himself unknown, within his breast
Unconscious bears the generous glowing flame
Of all the virtues of his royal line;
Oh! should they know that the dear youth survives,
That for his righteous cause this war began,
Their fury then would kindle to a blaze,
Might wrap the world in flames, and in the ruin
My blameless son must perish!
Mir. Seek not thus
To multiply the ills that hover round you;
Nor from the stores of busy fancy add
New shafts to fortune's quiver. Zamti's care
Hath still deceived suspicion's wakeful eye;

And o'er the Mandarin, his manners pure,
And sacred function, have diffused an air
Of venerable awe, which e'en can teach
These northern foes to soften into men.
Man. Yes, Mirvan, yes—Religion wears a mien
In Zamti's person so severely mild,
That the fierce Scythian rests upon his spear,
And wonders what he feels! Such is the charm
Of heart-felt virtue; such is nature's force
That speaks abroad, and in rude northern hearts
Can stamp the image of an awful God.
From that source springs some hope:—Wretch that I am!
Hope idly flutters on my trembling tongue,
While melancholy, brooding o'er her wrongs,
Lays waste the mind with horror and despair.
—What noise is that?—
Mir. Compose this storm of grief;
In every sound your fancy hears the Tartar——
Your husband this way bends——
Man. Celestial Powers!
What labouring sighs heave in his breast?—what terror
Rolls in the patriot's eye?—haste, Mirvan, hence;
Again look out; gather the flying news,
And let me know each circumstance of ruin.
[*Exit* MIRVAN.

Enter ZAMTI.

Man. Zamti!
Zamti. Mandane!
Man. Ah! what hast thou seen?
What hast thou heard?—Tell me—has fate decreed
The doom of China?
Zamti. China is no more!——
The eastern world is lost—this mighty empire
Falls with the universe beneath the stroke
Of savage force—falls from its towering hopes;
For ever, ever fallen!
Man. Yet, why, ye Powers!
Why should a tyrant, trained to lust and murder,
A lawless ravager from savage wilds,
Where cheerful day ne'er dawns, but lowering heaven
For ever rolls a turbulence of clouds;
Why should a monster thus usurp the world,
And trample fair simplicity from ill
Beneath his ruffian feet?——
Zamti. Far hence, Mandane,
Those happy days, alas! are fled, when peace
Here nursed her blooming olives, and shed round
Her fostering influence.—In vain the plan
Of sacred laws, by hoary elders taught,
Laws founded on the base of public weal,
Gave lessons to the world. In vain Confucius
Unlocked his radiant stores of moral truth;
In vain bright science, and each tender muse,
Beamed every elegance on polished life——
Barbarian power prevails. Whate'er our sages taught,
Or genius could inspire, must fade away,
And each fair virtue wither at the blast
Of northern domination.
Man. Fatal day!
More fatal e'en than that, which first beheld
This race accursed within these palace walls.
Since hope, that balm of wretched minds, is now
Irrevocably lost.
Zamti. Name not the day,
Which saw this city sacked—fresh stream my eyes,
Fresh bleeds my heart, whene'er the sad idea
Comes o'er my tortured mind. Why, cruel Powers!
Why in that moment could not Zamti fall!
Man. Thy sanctity, the symbol of thy God,
Made even the conqueror suspend his blow,
And murmur soft humanity. High Heaven
Protected thee for its own great designs;
To save the royal child, the new-born babe,
From the dire slaughter of his ancient line.
Zamti. Yes, my Mandane, in that hour of carnage,
For purposes yet in the womb of time,
I was reserved. I was ordained to save
The infant boy; the dear, the precious charge,
The last of all my kings:—full twenty years
I've hid him from the world, and from himself;
And now I swear——Kneel we together here;
While in this dreadful pause our souls renew
Their solemn purpose.——— [*Both kneel.*
Thou all-gracious Being,
Whose tutelary care hath watched the fate
Of China's Orphan, who hast taught his steps
The paths of safety, still envelop him
In sevenfold night, till your own hour is come;
Till your slow justice see the dread occasion
To rouse his soul, and bid him walk abroad,
Vicegerent of your power;—and if thy servant,
Or this his soft associate, e'er defeat
By any word or deed the great design,
Then straight may all your horrible displeasure
Be launched upon us from your red right arm,
And in one ruin dash us both together,
The blasted monuments of wrath!
Man. That here
Mandane vows ne'er to betray his cause,
Be it enrolled in the records of Heaven!
[*Both rise.*
Zamti. And now my heart more lightly beats; methinks,
With strength redoubled I can meet the shock
Of adverse fate.
Man. And lo! the trial comes——
For see where Etan mourns——See where the youth,
Unknowing of the storm that gathers o'er him,
Brings some new tale of woe.——

Enter ETAN.

Etan. My honoured father,
And you, my helpless mother,—ah! where now,
Illustrious wretched pair, where will ye fly?
Where will your miseries now find a shelter?
Zamti. In virtue——I and this dear faithful woman—
We ask no more.
Man. Ah! quickly, Etan, say
What means that pallid look? What new event
Brings on the work of fate?

Zamti. Say, does the tyrant
Return, unglutted yet with blood?
Etan. He does.
Even now his triumph moves within the gates,
In dread barbaric pomp:—the iron swarms
Of Hyperboreans troop along the streets,
Reeking from slaughter; while from gazing crowds
Of their dire countrymen, an uproar wild
Of joy ferocious through the astonished air
Howls like a northern tempest:—O'er the rest,
Proud in superior eminence of guilt,
The tyrant rides sublime. Behind his car
The refuse of his sword, a captive train
Display their honest scars, and gnash their teeth
With rage and desperation.
Man. Cruel fate!
Etan. With these a youth, distinguished from the rest,
Proceeds in sullen march. Heroic fire
Glows in his cheek, and from his ardent eye
Beams amiable horror.
Man. What of this youth?
Zamti. Be not alarmed, Mandane—What of him?
Etan. On him all eyes were fixed with eager gaze,
As if their spirits, struggling to come forth,
Would strain each visual nerve—while through the crowd
A busy murmur ran—'If fame say right,
'Beneath that habit lurks a prince; the last
'Of China's race.' The rumour spreads abroad
From man to man; and all with loud acclaim
Denounce their vengeance on him.
Man. Ha! what say'st thou, Etan?
Heavens, how each blackening hour, in deeper horror,
Comes charged with woe!
Zamti. It cannot be. Ye vain,
Ye groundless terrors, hence! [*Aside.*
Man. My honoured lord,
Those eyes upturned to Heaven, alas! in vain,
Declare your inward conflict.
Zamti. Loved Mandane,
I prithee leave me—but a moment leave me.
Heed not the workings of a sickly fancy,
Wrought on by every popular report,
Thou know'st, with Morat, I convey'd the infant
Far as the eastern point of Corea's realm;
There, where no human trace is seen, no sound
Assails the ear, save when the foaming surge
Breaks on the shelving beach, that there the youth
Might mock their busy search. Then check thy fears—
Retire, my love, awhile; I'll come anon—
And fortify thy soul with firm resolve,
Becoming Zamti's wife.
Man. Yes, Zamti's wife
Shall never act unworthy of her lord!
Then hence I'll go, and satisfy each doubt
This youthful captive raises in my heart,
Quick panting with its fears. And O ye powers!
Protect my son, my husband, and my king!
[*Exit* MANDANE.
Zamti. Come hither, Etan—thou perceiv'st the toils
That now encircle me.
Etan. Alas! too well
I see the impending storm. But surely, sir,
Should this young captive prove the royal orphan,
You'll never own the important truth.
Zamti. Dream not, young man,
To stand secure, yet blooming into life,
While vengeance hovers o'er your father's head.
The stock once fallen, each scyon must decay.
Etan. Then let me perish!—Witness for me, Heaven,
Could Etan's fall appease the tyrant's wrath,
A willing victim he would yield his life,
And ask no greater boon of Heaven.
Zamti. This zeal,
So fervid in a stranger's cause———
Etan. A stranger!—he!—
My king a stranger!—Sir, you never meant it—
Perhaps you would explore the fiery seeds
Of Etan's temper, ever prompt to blaze
At honour's sacred name. Perish the man,
Who, when his country calls him to defend
The rights of human kind, or bravely die,
Who, then, to glory dead, can shrink aghast,
And hold a council with his abject fears!
Zamti. These towerings of the soul, alas! are vain.
I know the Tartar well—should I attempt
By any virtuous fraud to veil the truth,
His lion-rage again shall stalk abroad,
Again shall quaff the blood of innocence;
And, for Zaphimri, all the poor remains
Of China's matrons, and her hoary sires,
Her blooming virgins, and her lisping babes,
Shall yield their throats to the fell murderer's knife,
And all be lost for ever!
Etan. Then at once
Proclaim him to the world; each honest hand
Will grasp a sword, and, 'midst the circling guards,
Reach the usurper's heart—or, should they fail,
Should overwhelming bands obstruct the deed,
They'll greatly dare to die!—better to die
With falling liberty, than basely lead
An ignominious life. Zaphimri lost,
Ne'er shall fair order dawn; but through the land
Slavery shall clank her chains, and violation,
Rapine, and murder, riot at the will
Of lust and lawless power.
Zamti. Thou brave young man,
Indulge my fond embrace—thy lovely ardour
It glads me thus to see!—To ease at once
Thy generous fears—the prince Zaphimri's safe;
Safe in my guardian care.
Etan. The prisoner, sir,
He does not then alarm you?
Zamti. No! from thence

I've nought to fear.
Etan. Oh! sir, inform your son
Where is the royal heir?
Zamti. Seek not too soon
To know that truth—now I'll disclose the work,
The work of vengeance, which my labouring soul
Has long been fashioning. Even at this hour
Stupendous ruin hovers o'er the heads
Of this accursed race.
Etan. Ruin!
Zamti. I'll tell thee——
When Timurkan led forth his savage bands,
Unpeopling this great city, I then seized
The hour, to tamper with a chosen few,
Who have resolved, when the barbarians lie
Buried in sleep and wine, and hotly dream
Their havock o'er again—then, then, my son,
In one collected blow to burst upon them;
Like their own northern clouds, whose midnight horror
Impending o'er the world, at length breaks forth
In the vaunt lightning's blaze, in storms and thunder
Through all the reddening air, till frighted nature
Start from her couch, and waken to a scene
Of uproar and destruction.
Etan. Oh! my father,
The glorious enterprise!
Zamti. Mark me, young man.
Seek thou my friends, Orasming and Zimventi:
In the dim holy cloisters of yon temple
Thou wilt find them musing. Near Osmingti's tomb
I charged them all convene, and there do thou
Await my coming—bid them ne'er remit
Their high heroic ardour; let them know,
Whate'er shall fall on this old mouldering clay,
The tyrant never shall subdue my mind.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter ZAMTI.

Zamti. Dream on, deluded tyrant! yes, dream on
In blind security! whene'er high Heaven
Means to destroy, it curses with illusion,
With error of the mind. Yes, wreak thy fury
Upon this captive youth; whoe'er he is,
If from his death this groaning empire rise,
Once more itself, resplendent, rich in arts
That humanize the world, he pays a debt
Due to his king, his country, and his God.
His father, wheresoe'er he dwell, in tears
Shall tell the glory on his boy derived;
And even his mother, amidst her matron shrieks,
Shall bless the child-bed pang that brought him forth
To this great lot, by fate to few allowed!
What wouldst thou, Mirvan?

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Eagerly without
A reverend stranger craves access to Zamti:
His head hoary with age, with galling tears
His eyes suffused; his every look impatience—
Zamti. Give him admittance. [*Exit* MIRVAN.
How my spirits rush
Tumultuous to my heart—what may this mean?
Lo! where he comes——

Enter MORAT.

Morat. Zamti!——
Zamti. Ha! through the veil
Of age, that face—that mien—Morat!
Morat. Oh! Zamti!
Let me once more embrace thee——
Zamti. Good old man! [*They embrace.*
But wherefore art thou here? what of my boy?
Morat. Ah! what indeed? Even from the ocean's margin,
Parched with the sun, or chilled with midnight damps,
O'er hills, and rocks, and dreary continents,
In vain I've followed——
Zamti. Why didst let him forth?
Morat. Think not thy Morat urged him to the deed.
His valour was the cause; and soon as fame
Proclaimed the prince alive, the mighty din
Of preparation through all Corea's realm
Alarmed his breast—indignant of controul,
He burst his covert, and now, hapless youth—
Zamti. Ah! dead! in battle fallen!
Morat. Alas! even now
He drags the conqueror's chain.
Zamti. Mandane then
May still embrace her son! My boy may live,
To know the sweets of freedom ere he die.
Morat. Alas! the measure of your woes is full!
Unconscious of our frauds, the tyrant thinks
The prince his prisoner in your son.
Zamti. Ah! Morat!
Morat. Wild through the streets the foe calls out on Zamti.
Thee they pronounce the author of this fraud;
And on your Hamet threaten instant vengeance.
Zamti. There was but this—but this, ye cruel powers,
And this you've heaped upon me! Was it not
Enough to tear him from his mother's arms—
Doomed for his prince to wander o'er the world!

Alas! what needed more? Fond foolish eyes,
Stop your unbidden gush——tear, tear me piecemeal——
No! I will not complain—but whence on him
Could that suspicion glance?
Morat. This very morn,
Ere yet the battle joined, a faithful messenger,
Who through the friendly gloom of night had held
His darkling way, and passed the Tartar's camp,
Brought me advices from the Corean chief,
That soon as Hamet joined the warlike train,
His story he related. Straight the gallant leader
With open arms received him—knew him for thy son,
In secret knew him, nor revealed he aught
That touched his birth. But still the busy voice
Of fame, increasing as she goes, through all the ranks
Babbled abroad each circumstance. By thee
How he was privately convey'd—sent forth
A tender infant to be reared in solitude,
A stranger to himself! The warriors saw
With what a graceful port he moved in arms,
An early hero! deemed him far above
The common lot of life—deemed him Zaphimri,
And all with reverential awe beheld him.
This, this, my Zamti, reached the tyrant's ear,
And rises into horrid proof.
Zamti. If so,
Oh! what a sacrifice must now be made! [*Aside.*
Morat. But when the secret shall be known—
Zamti. Oh! Morat!
Does thy poor bleeding country still remain
Dear to thy heart? Say, dost thou still revere
That holy power above, Supreme of Beings,
Mistaken by the Bonzee, whom our fathers
Worshipped in happier days?
Morat. He—only he
For twenty years hath given me strength in exile.
Zamti. Then bending here, before his awful throne,
Swear, what I now unfold shall ever lie
In sacred silence wrapped.
Morat. I swear!
Zamti. Now mark me—
Morat—my son—[*Turning aside.*]—Oh! cruel, cruel task,
To conquer nature while the heart-strings break!
Morat. Why heave those sighs? and why that burst of grief?
Zamti. My son—his guiltless blood—I cannot speak! [*Bursts into tears.*
Morat. Ha! Wilt thou shed his blood?
Zamti. Thou wretched father!— [*Half aside.*
Morat. Oh! had you known the virtues of the youth,
His truth, his courage, his enlightened mind—
Zamti. I prithee urge no more—here nature's voice
Speaks in such pleadings: such reproaches, Morat,
—Here in my very heart—give woundings here,
Thou canst not know, and only parents feel!
Morat. And wilt thou, cruel in thy tears—
Zamti. Nay, cease,
In pity to a father, cease—Think, Morat—
Think of Zaphimri!
Morat. Ah! how fares the prince?
Zamti. He fares, my Morat, like a god on earth,
Unknowing his celestial origin,
Yet quick, intense, and bursting into action;
His great heart labouring with—he knows not what—
Prodigious deeds! Deeds, which ere long shall rouse,
Astonish, and alarm the world.
Morat. What mean
Those mystic sounds?
Zamti. Revenge, conquest, and freedom!
Morat. Conquest and freedom!
Zamti. Ay! conquest and freedom!
The midnight hour shall call a chosen band
Of hidden patriots forth; who, when the foe
Sinks down in drunken revelry, shall pour
The gathered rage of twenty years upon him,
And vindicate the eastern world.
Morat. By Heaven!
The news revives my soul.
Zamti. And canst thou think,
To save one vulgar life, that Zamti now
Will mar the vast design? No; let him bleed,
Let my boy bleed! in such a cause as this,
I can resign my son—with tears of joy
Resign him! and one complicated pang
Shall wrench him from my heart.—
The conqueror comes! [*Warlike music within.*
This is no hour for parleying—Morat, hence!
And leave me to my fixed resolve.
Morat. Yet think,
Think of some means to save your Hamet.
Zamti. Oh!
It cannot be—the soul of Timurkan
Is bold and stirring: when occasion calls,
He springs aloft, like an expanding fire,
And marks his way with ruin. Now he knows
Zaphimri lives, his fear will make him daring
Beyond his former crimes—for joy and riot,
Which this day's triumph brings, remorseless rage
And massacre succeed—and all our hopes
Are blasted for an unimportant boy.
[*A second flourish.*
Morat. That nearer sound proclaims his dread approach.
Yet once more, Zamti, think—
Zamti. No more—I will send
Those shall conduct thee where Orasming lives.
There dwell unseen of all. But, Morat, first
Seek my Mandane. Heavens! how shall I bear
Her strong impetuosity of grief,
When she shall know my fatal purpose! Thou
Prepare her tender spirit; sooth her mind,
And save, Oh! save me from that dreadful conflict! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Two large Folding-gates in the back-scene are burst open by the Tartars, and then enter TIMURKAN, *with his train.*

Timur. Hail to this regal dome, this gorgeous palace!
Where this inventive race have lavished all
Their elegance:—ye gay apartments, hail!
Beneath your storied roof, where mimic life
Glows to the eye, and at the painter's touch
A new creation lives along the walls;
Once more receive a conqueror, arrived
From rougher scenes, where stern rebellion dared
Draw forth his phalanx; till this warlike arm
Hurled desolation on his falling ranks,
And now the monster, in yon field of death,
Lies overwhelmed in ruin.

Octar. There he fell,
No more to stalk thy realm: the eastern world,
From this auspicious day, beneath your feet
Lies bound in adamantine chains.

Timur. Thus, Octar,
Shall Timurkan display his conquering banners,
From high Samarcand's walls, to where the Tanais
Devolves his icy tribute to the sea.

Octar. But first this captive prince!

Timur. Yes, Octar, first
Zaphimri gluts my rage—bring him before us—first
We'll crush the seeds of dark conspiracy;
For Zamti—he, that false insidious slave,
Shall dearly pay his treasons.

Octar. Zamti's crimes
'Twere best to leave unpunished:——versed in wiles
Of sly hypocrisy, he wins the love
Of the deluded multitude. 'Twould seem,
Should we inflict that death his frauds deserve,
As if we meant destruction to their faith:
When a whole people's minds are once inflamed
For their religious rights, their fury burns
With rage more dreadful, as the source is holy.

Timur. Octar, thou reason'st right:—henceforth my art,
To make this stubborn race receive the yoke,
Shall be by yielding to their softer manners,
Their vesture, laws, and customs: thus to blend
And make the whole one undistinguished people.
The boy comes forth in sullen mood—what passions
Swell in his breast in vain!—

Enter HAMET, *in chains.*

Timur. Thou art the youth,
Who mowed our battle down, and fleshed your sword
In many a slaughtered Tartar.

Hamet. True; I am.

Timur. Too well I marked thy rage, and saw thee hew
A wasteful passage through the embattled plain.

Hamet. Then, be thou witness for me, in that hour
I never shunned your thickest war; and if
In yonder field, where my poor countrymen,
In mangled heaps, lie many a rood extended,
Kind fate had doomed me to a noble fall,
With this right arm I earned it.

Timur. Say, what motive
Unsheathed thy rebel blade, and bade thee seek
These wars?

Hamet. The love of honourable deeds,
The groans of bleeding China, and the hate
Of tyrants.

Timur. Ha!—take heed, rash youth—I see
This lesson has been taught thee. Octar, haste,
Seek me the mandarin: let him forthwith
Attend me here. [*Exit* OCTAR.] Now tremble at my words!
Thy motive to these wars is known—thou art
Zaphimri.

Hamet. I Zaphimri!

Timur. False one, yes:
Thou art Zaphimri—thou!—whom treacherous guile
Stole from my rage, and sent to distant wilds,
Till years and horrid counsel should mature thee
For war and wild commotion.

Hamet. I the prince!
The last of China's race! Nay, mock not majesty,
Nor with the borrowed robes of sacred kings
Dress up a wretch like me—Were I Zaphimri,
Think'st thou thy trembling eye could bear the shock
Of a much-injured king? Couldst thou sustain it?
Say, couldst thou bear to view a royal orphan,
Whose father, mother, brother, sisters, all,
Thy murderous arm hath long since laid in dust?
Whose native crown on thy ignoble brow
Thou dar'st dishonour? whose wide-wasted country
Thy arms have made a wilderness?

Timur. I see
Thou hast been tutored in thy lone retreat
By some sententious pedant. Soon these vain,
These turgid maxims, shall be all subdued
By thy approaching death.

Hamet. Let death come on;
Guilt, guilt alone shrinks back appalled—the brave
And honest still defy his dart;—the wise
Calmly can eye his frown;—and misery
Invokes his friendly aid to end her woes.

Timur. Thy woes, presumptuous youth, with all my fears,
Shall soon lie buried.

Enter ZAMTI.

Timur. Now, pious false one, say, who is that youth

Zamti. His air, his features, and his honest mien,
Proclaim all fair within. But, mighty sir,
I know him not.

Timur. Take heed, old man, nor dare,
As thou dost dread my power, to practise guile

Beneath a mask of sacerdotal perfidy:
Priestcraft, I think, calls it a pious fraud.
Zamti. Priestcraft and sacerdotal perfidy
To me are yet unknown. Religion's garb
Here never serves to consecrate a crime:
We have not yet, thank Heaven, so far imbibed
The vices of the north.
Timur. Thou vile impostor!
Avow Zaphimri, whom thy treacherous arts
Concealed from justice; or else desolation
Again shall ravage this devoted land.
Zamti. Alas! full well thou know'st, that arm already
Hath shed all royal blood.
Timur. Traitor, 'tis false!
By thee, vile slave, I have been wrought to think
The hated race destroyed: thy artful tale
Abused my credulous ear. But know, at length,
Some captive slaves, by my command impaled,
Have owned the horrid truth—have owned they fought
To seat Zaphimri on the throne of China.
Hear me, thou froward boy—dar'st thou be honest,
And answer who thou art?
Hamet. Dare I be honest!
I dare!—a mind, grown up in native honour,
Dares not be otherwise—then, if thy troops
Ask from the lightning of whose blade they fled,
Tell them 'twas Hamet's.
Zamti. 'Tis—it is my son!——
My boy—my Hamet!—— [*Aside.*
Timur. Where was your abode?
Hamet. Far hence remote, in Corea's happy realm,
Where the first beams of day, with orient blushes,
Tinge the salt wave; there, on the sea-beat shore,
A cavern rock yielded a lone retreat
To virtuous Morat.
Zamti. Oh! ill-fated youth! [*Aside.*
Hamet. The pious hermit, in that moss-grown dwelling,
Found an asylum from heart-piercing woes,
From slavery, and that restless din of arms,
With which thy fell ambition shook the world.
There too the sage nurtured my greener years;
With him and contemplation have I walked
The paths of wisdom: what the great Confucius
Of moral beauty taught, whate'er the wise,
Still wooing knowledge in her secret haunts,
Disclosed of nature to the sons of men,
My wondering mind has heard: but, above all,
The hermit taught me the most useful science,
That noble science to be brave and good.
Zamti. Oh! lovely youth! at every word he utters,
A soft effusion, mixed of grief and joy,
Flows o'er my heart. [*Aside.*
Timur. Who, said he, was your father?
Hamet. My birth the pious sage—I know not why——
Still wrapped in silence; and when urged to tell,
He only answered that a time might come,
I should not blush to know my father.
Timur. Now,
With truth declare, hast thou ne'er heard of Zamti?
Hamet. Of Zamti! Oft, enraptured with his name,
My heart has glowed within me, as I heard
The praises of the godlike man.
Timur. Thou slave, [*To* ZAMTI.
Each circumstance arraigns thy guilt!
Hamet. Oh! Heavens!
Can that be Zamti?
Timur. Yes, that is the traitor.
Hamet. Let me adore his venerable form,
Thus on my knees adore—
Zamti. I cannot look upon him,
Lest tenderness dissolve my feeble powers,
And wrest my purpose from me— [*Aside.*
Timur. Hence, vain boy!—
Thou specious traitor! thou false, hoary moralist! [*To* ZAMTI.
Confusion has o'erta'en thy subtile frauds.
To make my crown's assurance firm, that none
Hereafter shall aspire to wrench it from me,
Now own your fancied king; or, by yon heaven,
To make our vengeance sure, through all the east
Each youth shall die, and carnage thin mankind,
Till in the general wreck your boasted Orphan
Shall undistinguished fall. Thou know'st my word
Is fate. Octar, draw near—when treason lurks,
Each moment's big with danger—thou observe
These my commands——
[*Talks apart to* OCTAR.
Zamti. Now, virtuous cruelty, repress my tears!
Cease your soft conflict, Nature! Hear me, Tartar:
That youth—his air—his every look unmans me quite.
Timur. Wilt thou begin, dissembler?
Zamti. Down, down, down——
It must be so, or all is lost—That youth,
I've dealt by him—as every king could wish
In a like case, his faithful subjects would.
Timur. Dost thou, then, own it? Triumph, Timurkan,
And in Zaphimri's grave lie hushed my fears!
Brave Octar, let the victim straight be led
To yonder sacred fane: there, in the view
Of my rejoicing Tartars, the declining sun
Shall see him offered to our living Lama,
For this day's conquest: thence a golden train
Of radiant years shall mark my future sway.
[*Exit.*
Zamti. Flow, flow my tears, and ease this aching breast!
Hamet. Nay, do not weep for me, thou good old man!
If it will close the wounds of bleeding China,
That a poor wretch, like me, must yield his life,
I give it freely. If I am a king,
Though sure it cannot be, what greater blessing
Can a young prince enjoy, than to diffuse,
By one great act, that happiness on millions,
For which his life should be a round of care?
Come, lead me to my fate.
[*Exit with* OCTAR, *&c.*
Zamti. Hold, hold, my heart!—

My gallant, generous youth! Mandane's air,
His mother's dear resemblance, rives my soul.
Man. [*Within.*] Oh! let me fly, and find the barbarous man!
Where—where is Zamti?
Zamti. Ha! 'tis Mandane——
Wild as the winds, the mother all alive
In every heart-string, the forlorn one comes
To claim her boy!

Enter MANDANE.

Man. And can it then be true?
Is human nature exiled from thy breast?
Art thou indeed so barbarous?
Zamti. Loved Mandane,
Fix not your scorpions here; a bearded shaft
Already drinks my spirits up.
Man. I've seen
The trusty Morat—Oh! I've heard it all!
He would have shunned my steps; but what can 'scape
The eye of tenderness like mine?
Zamti. By Heaven
I cannot speak to thee!
Man. Think'st thou those tears,
Those false, those cruel tears, will choak the voice
Of a fond mother's love, now stung to madness?
Oh! I will rend the air with lamentations,
Root up this hair, and beat this throbbing breast,
Turn all connubial joys to bitterness,
To fell despair, to anguish and remorse,
Unless my son——
Zamti. Thou ever faithful woman,
Oh! leave me to my woes!
Man. Give me my child,
Thou worse than Tartar! give me back my son!
Oh! give him to a mother's eager arms,
And let me strain him to my heart!
Zamti. Heaven knows
How dear my boy is here! But our first duty
Now claims attention—to our country's love
All other tender fondnesses must yield:
I was a subject ere I was a father.
Man. You were a savage bred in Scythian wilds,
And humanizing pity never reached
Your heart—Was it for this—oh! thou unkind one!
Was it for this—oh! thou inhuman father!
You wooed me to your nuptial bed? So long
Have I then clasped thee in these circling arms,
And made this breast your pillow? Cruel, say,
Are these your vows? are these your fond endearments?
Nay, look upon me—if this wasted form,
These faded eyes have turned your heart against me,
With grief for you I withered in my bloom.
Zamti. Why wilt thou pierce my heart?
Man. Alas! my son,
Have I then bore thee in these matron arms,
To see thee bleed? Thus dost thou then return?
This could your mother hope, when first she sent
Her infant exile to a distant clime?
Ah! could I think thy early love of fame
Would urge thee to this peril? thus to fall,
By a stern father's will—by thee to die!
From thee, inhuman, to receive his doom:
Murdered by thee! Yet hear me, Zamti, hear me—
Thus, on my knees—I threaten now no more—
'Tis Nature's voice that pleads—Nature alarmed,
Quick, trembling, wild, touched to her inmost feeling,
When force would tear her tender young ones from her.
Zamti. Nay, seek not, with enfeebling fond ideas,
To swell the flood of grief—it is in vain—
He must submit to fate.
Man. Barbarian! no—— [*She rises hastily.*
He shall not die—rather—I prithee, Zamti,
Urge not a grief-distracted woman: tremble
At the wild fury of a mother's love!
Zamti. I tremble rather at a breach of oaths.
But thou! break thine—bathe your perfidious hands
In this life-blood—betray the righteous cause
Of all our sacred kings.
Man. Our kings! our kings!
What are the sceptered rulers of the world?
Formed of one common clay, are they not all
Doomed with each subject, with the meanest slave,
To drink the cup of human woe? alike
All levelled by affliction? Sacred kings!
'Tis human policy sets up their claim—
Mine is a mother's cause—mine is the cause
Of husband, wife, and child: those tend'rest ties
Superior to your right divine of kings!——
Zamti. Then go, Mandane—thou once faithful woman,
Dear to this heart in vain: go, and forget
Those virtuous lessons, which I oft have taught thee,
In fond credulity, while on each word
You hung enamoured. Go, to Timurkan
Reveal the awful truth. Be thou spectatress
Of murdered majesty. Embrace your son,
And let him lead, in shame and servitude,
A life ignobly bought. Then let those eyes,
Those faded eyes, which grief for me hath dimmed,
With guilty joy re-animate their lustre,
To brighten slavery, and beam their fires
On the fell Scythian murderer.
Man. And is it thus,
Thus is Mandane known? My soul disdains
The vile imputed guilt. No—never—never—
Still I am true to fame. Come, lead me hence,
Where I may lay down life to save Zaphimri,
But save my Hamet too. Then, then you'll find
A heart beats here, as warm and great as thine.
Zamti. Then make with me one strong, one glorious effort,
And rank with those, who, from the first of time,
In Fame's eternal archives stand revered,
For conquering all the dearest ties of Nature,
To serve the general weal.
Man. That savage virtue

Loses with me its horrid charms. I have sworn
To save my king. But should a mother turn
A dire assassin? oh! I cannot bear
The piercing thought! Distraction, quick distraction
Will seize my brain. Think thou behold'st my Hamet,
The dear, the lovely youth, my blooming hero!
Think thou behold'st him—See! my child! my child!
By guards surrounded, a devoted victim!
Barbarian, hold—ah! see, he dies! he dies!

[*She faints into* ZAMTI'S *arms.*

Zamti. Where is Arsace? Fond maternal love
Shakes her weak frame.

Enter ARSACE.

Quickly, Arsace, help
This ever-tender creature. Wandering life
Rekindles in her cheek. Soft, lead her off
To where the fanning breeze, in yonder bower,
May woo her spirits back.—Propitious Heaven!
Pity the woundings of a father's heart!
Pity my strugglings with this best of women!
Support our virtue! kindle in our souls
A ray of your divine enthusiasm;
Such as inflames the patriot's breast, and lifts
The impassioned mind to that sublime of virtue,
That even on the rack it feels the good,
Which, in a single hour, it works for millions,
And leaves the legacy to after times!

[*Exit, leading off* MANDANE.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Temple. Several tombs up and down the stage.*

Enter MORAT.

Morat. This is the place—these the long winding aisles,
The solemn arches, whose religious awe
Attunes the mind to melancholy musing,
Such as befits freemen reduced to slaves.
Here Zamti meets his friends. Amid these tombs,
Where lie the sacred manes of our kings,
They pour their orisons——hold converse here
With the illustrious shades of murdered heroes,
And meditate a great revenge——(*a groan is heard*) A groan!
The burst of anguish from some care-worn wretch,
That sorrows o'er his country—ha! 'tis Zamti!

ZAMTI *comes out of a tomb.*

Zamti. Who's he, that seeks these mansions of the dead?
Morat. The friend of Zamti and of China.
Zamti. Morat!
Come to my arms, thou good, thou best of men;
I have been weeping o'er the sacred reliques
Of a dear murdered king—Where are our friends?
Hast seen Orasming?
Morat. Through these vaults of death
Lonely he wanders, plunged in deep despair.
Zamti. Hast thou not told him? hast thou nought revealed
Touching Zaphimri?
Morat. There will I wait thy will.
Zamti. Oh! thou art ever faithful! on thy lips
Sits pensive Silence, with her hallowed finger,
Guarding the pure recesses of thy mind.
But, lo! they come.

Enter ORASMING, ZIMVENTI, *and others.*

Zamti. Droop ye, my gallant friends?
Oras. Oh! Zamti, all is lost! Our dreams of liberty
Are vanished into air. Nought now avails
Integrity of life. E'en heaven, combined
With lawless might, abandons us and virtue.
Zamti. Can your great souls thus shrink within ye? thus
From heroes will ye dwindle into slaves?
Oras. Oh! could you give us back Zaphimri! then
Danger would smile, and lose its face of horror.
Zamti. What! would his presence fire ye?
Oras. 'Twould, by Heaven!
Zim. This night should free us from the Tartar's yoke.
Zamti. Then mark the care of the all-gracious gods!
This youthful captive, whom in chains they hold,
Is not Zaphimri.
Oras. } Not Zaphimri!
Zim. }
Zamti. No!
Unconscious of himself, and to the world unknown,
He walks at large among us.
Oras. Heavenly powers!
Zamti. This night, my friends, this very night to rise
Refulgent from a blow, that frees us all—
From the usurper's fate! the first of men,
Deliverer of his country!——
Oras. Mighty gods!
Can this be possible?
Zamti. It is most true.
I'll bring him to ye straight—(*calling to* ETAN *within the tomb*) What ho! come forth—
You seem transfixed with wonder! oh! my friends,
Watch all the motions of your rising spirit,
Direct your ardour, when anon you hear
What fate, long pregnant with the vast event,
Is labouring into birth.

ETAN *comes out of the tomb.*

Etan. Each step I move,
A deeper horror sits on all the tombs;
Each shrine, each altar seems to shake, as if
Conscious of some important crisis.
Zamti. Yes!
A crisis, great indeed, is now at hand!
Heaven holds it's golden balance forth, and weighs
Zaphimri's and the Tartar's destiny,
While hovering angels tremble round the beam.
Hast thou beheld that picture?
Etan. Fixed attention
Hath paused on every part; yet still to me
It shadows forth the forms of things unknown;
All imagery obscure, and wrapt in darkness.
Zamti. That darkness my informing breath shall clear,
As morn dispels the night. Lo! here displayed
This mighty kingdom's fall.——
Etan. Alas! my father,
At sight of these sad colourings of woe,
Our tears will mix with honest indignation.
Zamti. Nay, but survey it closer——see that child,
That royal infant, the last sacred relic
Of China's ancient line—see where a mandarin
Conveys the babe to his wife's fostering breast,
There to be nourished in an humble state;
While their own son is sent to climes remote,
That, should the dire usurper e'er suspect
The prince alive, he, in his stead, might bleed,
And mock the murderer's rage.
Etan. Amazement thrills
Through all my frame, and my mind, big with wonder,
Feels every power suspended!
Zamti. Rather say,
That strong imagination burns within thee——
Dost thou not feel a more than common ardour?
Etan. By Heaven! my soul dilates with some new impulse;
Some strange inspired emotion—Would the hour
Of fate were come!—this night my dagger's hilt
I'll bury in the tyrant's heart.
Zamti. Wilt thou?
Etan. By all the mighty dead, that round us lie,
By all who this day groan in chains, I will.
Zamti. And when thou dost—then tell him 'tis the prince
That strikes!
Etan. The prince's wrongs shall nerve my arm
With tenfold rage.
Zamti. Nay, but the prince himself!
Etan. What says my father?
Zamti. Thou art China's orphan;
The last of all our kings—no longer Etan,
But now Zaphimri!
Zaph. Ha!
Oras. O wondrous hand
Of Heaven!
Zaph. A crowd of circumstances rise——
Thy frequent hints obscure——thy pious care
To train my youth to greatness.—Lend your aid
To my astonished powers, that feebly bear
This unexpected shock of royalty!
Zamti. Thou noble youth, now put forth all your strength,
And let Heaven's vengeance brace each sinew.
Zaph. Vengeance!
That word has shot its lightning through my soul.
But tell me, Zamti—still 'tis wonder all——
Am I, indeed, the royal orphan?
Zamti. Thou——
Thou art the king, whom, as my humble son,
I've nurtured in humanity and virtue.
Thy foes could never think to find thee here,
Even in the lion's den; and therefore here
I've fixed thy safe asylum, while my son
Hath dragged his life in exile.—Oh! my friends,
Morat will tell ye all—each circumstance.
Meantime—there is your king.
[*All kneel to him.*
Oras. } Long live the father of the eastern
Zim. } world!
Zamti. Sole governor of earth!——
Zaph. All-ruling powers!
Is then a great revenge for all the wrongs
Of bleeding China—are the fame and fate
Of all posterity included here
Within my bosom? [*They all rise.*
Zamti. Yes; they are:—the shades
Of your great ancestors now rise before thee,
Heroes and demi-gods——Aloud they call
For the fell Tartar's blood.
Zaph. Oh, Zamti! all,
That can alarm the powers of man, now stirs
In this expanding breast——
Zamti. Anon to burst,
With hideous ruin, on the foe.——My gallant heroes,
Are our men stationed at their posts?
Oras. They are.
Zamti. Is every gate secured?
Oras. All safe.
Zamti. The signal fixed?
Oras. It is.—Will Mirvan join us?
Zamti. Doubt him not.
In bitterness of soul he counts his wrongs,
And pants for vengeance——would have joined ye here,
But, favoured as he is, his post requires him
About the Tartar's person. The assault begun,
He'll turn his arms upon the astonished foe,
And add new horrors to the wild commotion.
Zaph. Now, bloody spoiler! now thy hour draws nigh,
And, ere the dawn, thy guilty reign shall end.
Zamti. How my heart burns within me!—Oh! my friends,
Call now to mind the scene of desolation,
Which Timurkan, in one accursed hour,
Heaped on this groaning land!—Even now I see
The savage bands, o'er reeking hills of dead,
Forcing their rapid way.—I see them urge,
With rage unhallowed, to this sacred temple,
Where good Osmingti, with his queen and children,
Fatigued the gods averse. See where Arphisa,

Rending the air with agonizing shrieks,
Tears her dishevelled hair:—then, with a look
Fixed on her babes, grief choaks its passage up,
And all the feelings of a mother's breast
Throbbing in one mixed pang, breathless she faints
Within her husband's arms. Adown his cheek,
In copious streams, fast flowed the manly sorrow;
While, clustering round his knees, his little offspring,
In tears all-eloquent, with arms outstretched,
Sue for parental aid.——
Zaph. Go on—the tale
Will fit me for a scene of horror.
Zamti. Oh! my prince,
The charge, which your great father gave me, still
Sounds in my ear. Ere yet the foe burst in,
'Zamti,' said he—Ah! that imploring eye!
That agonizing look!——
'Preserve my little boy, my cradled infant—
'Shield him from ruffians——train his youth to virtue:—
'Virtue will rouse him to a great revenge;
'Or, failing, virtue shall still make him happy.'
He could no more—the cruel spoiler seized him,
And dragged my king—my ever honoured king—
The father of his people—basely dragged him,
By his white reverend locks, from yonder altar,
Here—on the blood-stained pavement; while the queen,
And her dear fondlings, in one mingled heap,
Died in each other's arms!
Zaph. Revenge! revenge!
With more than lion's nerve I'll spring upon him,
And at one blow relieve the groaning world.
Let us this moment carry sword and fire
To yon devoted walls, and whelm him down
In ruin and dismay!
Zamti. Zaphimri, no.
By rashness you may mar a noble cause.
To you, my friends, I render up my charge—
To you I give your king. Farewell, my sovereign!
Zaph. Thou good, thou godlike man!—a thousand feelings
Of warmest friendship—all the tendencies
Of heart-felt gratitude are struggling here,
And fain would speak to thee, my more than father!
—Farewell!—sure we shall meet again!
Zamti. We shall——
Zaph. Farewell!—Zamti, farewell!—[*Embraces him.*]—Orasming, now
The noblest duty calls us. Now remember
We are the men, whom, from all human kind,
Our fate hath now selected, to come forth
Asserters of the public weal;—to drench our swords
In the oppressor's heart;—to do a deed
Which Heaven, intent on its own holy work,
Shall pause with pleasure to behold.
[*Exit, with conspirators.*
Zamti. May the Most High
Pour down his blessings on him! and anon,
In the dead waste of night, when awful justice
Walks, with her crimson steel, o'er slaughtered heaps
Of groaning Tartars, may he then direct
His youthful footsteps through the paths of peril!
Oh, may he guide the horrors of the storm,
An angel of your wrath, to point your vengeance
On every guilty head! Then, then 'twill be enough;
When you have broken the oppressor's rod,
Your reign will then be manifest—Mankind will see
That truth and goodness still obtain your care—
[*A dead march.*
What mean those deathful sounds!—Again!—they lead
My boy to slaughter!—Oh! look down, ye Heavens!
Look down propitious!—Teach me to subdue
That nature which ye gave!—— [*Exit.*

A Dead March. Enter HAMET, OCTAR, *Guards, &c.*

Octar. Here let the victim fall, and with his blood
Wash his forefathers' tomb. Here ends the hated race.
The eastern world, through all her wide domain,
Shall then submissive feel the Scythian yoke,
And yield to Timurkan.
Hamet. [*Standing by the tomb.*] Where is the tyrant? I would have him see,
With envy see, the unconquered power of Virtue;
How it can calmly bleed, smile on his racks,
And with strong pinion soar above his power,
To regions of perennial day.
Octar. The father
Of the whole eastern world shall mark thee well,
When, at to-morrow's dawn, thy breathless corse
Is borne through all our streets for public view.
It now befits thee to prepare for death.
Hamet. I am prepared. I have no lust or rapine,
No murders to repent of. Undismayed,
I can behold all-judging Heaven, whose hand,
Still compassing it's wondrous ends, by means
Inextricable to all mortal clue,
Hath now inclosed me in it's awful maze.
Since 'tis by your decree that, thus beset,
The inexorable angel hovers o'er me,
Be your great bidding done!
Octar. The sabre's edge
Thirsts for his blood—then let it's lightning fall
On his aspiring head. [*Guards seize* HAMET
Man. [*within*] Off—set me free!—inhuman barbarous ruffians!——
Octar. What means that woman with dishevelled hair,
And wild extravagance of woe?
Man. My griefs
Scorn all restraint—I must—I will have way!
[*She enters, and throws herself on her knee*
Me—me—on me convert your rage—plunge deep
Deep in this bosom your abhorred steel,
But spare his precious life!
Octar. Hence, quickly bear

This wild, this frantic woman!
Man. Never, never—
You shall not force me hence. Here will I cling
Fast to the earth, and rivet here my hands,
In all the fury of the last despair!
He is my child!——my dear, dear son!
Octar. How, woman!
Said'st thou your son?
Man. Yes, Octar, mine; my son,
My boy—my Hamet! [*She rises, and embraces him*] Let my eager love
Fly all unbounded to him—oh! my child!—my child!
Octar. Suspend the stroke, ye ministers of death,
Till Timurkan hear of this new event.
Meantime, thou, Mirvan, speed in quest of Zamti,
And let him answer here this wondrous tale.
[*Exit.*
Mir. The time demands his presence; or despair
May wring each secret from her tender breast;
[*Aside.*
And then our glorious, fancied pile of freedom,
At one dire stroke, shall tumble into naught.
[*Exit.*
Man. Why did'st thou dare return?—ah! rather
Did'st thou so long defer, with every grace,
And every growing virtue, thus to raise
Your mother's dear delight to rapture?
Hamet. Lost
In the deep mist of darkling ignorance,
To me my birth's unknown—but sure that look,
Those tears, those shrieks, that animated grief,
Defying danger, all declare the effect
Of Nature's strugglings in a parent's heart.
Then let me pay my filial duty here,
Kneel to her native dignity, and pour
In tears of joy the transport of a son!
Man. Thou art, thou art my son!—thy father's face,
His ev'ry feature, blooming in his boy!
Oh! tell me, tell me all—how hast thou lived
With faithful Morat?—how did he support
In dreary solitude thy tender years?—
How train thy growing mind?—oh! quickly tell me,
Oh! tell me all, and charm me with thy tongue!
Hamet. Mysterious Powers! have I then lived to this,
In the hour of peril thus to find a parent,
In virtue firm, majestic in distress,
At length to feel unutterable bliss
In her dear circling arms— [*They embrace.*

Enter TIMURKAN, OCTAR, *&c.*

Timur. Where is this wild
Outrageous woman, who, with headlong grief,
Suspends my dread command?—Tear them asunder!
Send her to some dark cell to rave and shriek,
And dwell with madness—and let instant death
Leave that rash youth a headless trunk before me.
Man. Now by the ever-burning lamps that light
Our holy shrines, by great Confucius' altar,
By the prime source of life, and light, and being,
That is my child, the blossom of my joys!
Send for his cruel father—he—'tis he
Intends a fraud—he, for a stranger's life,
Would yield his offspring to the cruel axe,
And rend a wretched mother's brain with madness!

Enter ZAMTI.

Zamti. Sure the sad accents of Mandane's voice
Struck on my frighted sense!
Timur. Once more, thou slave!
Who is that stubborn youth?
Zamti. Alas! what needs
This iteration of my griefs?
Man. Oh! horror!—horror!
Thou marble-hearted father!—'tis your child,
And would'st thou see him bleed?
Zamti. On him!—on him
Let fall your rage, and ease my soul at once
Of all it's fears!
Man. Oh! my devoted child!— [*She faints.*
Hamet. Support her, Heaven! support her tender frame!——
Now, tyrant, now I beg to live—[*Kneels*] lo! here
I plead for life; not for the wretched boon
To breathe the air, which thy ambition taints;
But oh! to ease a mother's pains; for her,
For that dear object—oh! let me live for her!
Timur. Now by the conquests this good sword has won,
In her wild vehemence of grief I hear
The genuine voice of nature.
Man. [*Recovering.*] Ah! where is he?
He is my son! my child! and not Zaphimri!
Oh! let me clasp thee to my heart! thy hard,
Thy cruel father shall not tear thee from me!
Timur. Hear me, thou frantic mourner, dry those tears—
Perhaps you still may save this darling son.
Man. Ah! quickly name the means!
Timur. Give up your king,
Your phantom of a king, to sate my vengeance.
Hamet. Oh! my much honoured mother, never hear
The base, the dire proposal! let me rather
Exhaust my life-blood at each gushing vein.
Mandane, then—then you may well rejoice
To find your child—then you may truly know
The best delight a mother's heart can prove,
When her son dies with glory.
Timur. Curses blast
The stripling's pride! [*Talks apart with* OCTAR.
Zamti. Ye venerable host,
Ye mighty shades of China's royal line,
Forgive the joy that mingles with my tears,
When I behold him still alive! Propitious powers!
You never meant entirely to destroy

This bleeding country, when your kind indulgence
Lends us a youth like him.
Oh! I can hold no more—let me enfold
That lovely ardour in his father's arms—
My brave—my generous boy! [*Embraces him.*
Timur. Dost thou at length
Confess it, traitor?
Zamti. Yes, I boast it, tyrant;
Boast it to thee—to earth and heaven I boast,
This—this is Zamti's son!
Hamet. At length the hour,
The glorious hour is come, by Morat promised,
When Hamet shall not blush to know his father.
[*Kneels to him.*
Zamti. Oh! thou intrepid youth! what bright reward
Can your glad sire bestow on such desert?
The righteous gods, and your own inward feelings
Shall give the sweetest retribution. Now,
Mandane, now my soul forgives thee all,
Since I have made acquaintance with my son:
Thy lovely weakness I can now excuse;
But oh! I charge thee by a husband's right——
Timur. A husband's right! a traitor has no right—
Society disclaims him—Woman, hear——
Mark well my words—Discolour not thy soul
With the black hue of crimes like his—renounce
All Hymeneal vows, and take again
Your much-loved boy to his fond mother's arms,
While justice whirls that traitor to his fate.
Man. Thou vile adviser!—what, betray my lord,
My honoured husband? Turn a Scythian wife?
Forget the many years of fond delight,
In which my soul ne'er knew decreasing love,
Charmed with his noble, all-accomplished mind?
No, tyrant, no! with him I'll rather die;
With him in ruin more supremely blest,
Than guilt triumphant on its throne.
Zamti. Now, then,
Inhuman Tartar, I defy thy power.
Lo! here, the father, mother, and the son!
Try all your tortures on us—here we stand,
Resolved to leave a tract of bright renown
To mark our beings—all resolved to die
The votaries of honour!
Timur. Then die ye shall—what, ho! guards, seize the slaves,
Deep in some baleful dungeon's midnight gloom,
Let each apart be plunged—and Etan too—
Let him be forthwith found—he too shall share
His father's fate.
Mir. Be it my task, dread sir,
To make the rack ingenious in new pains,
Till even cruelty almost relent
At their keen, agonizing groans.
Timur. Be that,
Mirvan, thy care. Now, by the immortal Lama,
I'll wrest this mystery from them—else the dawn
Shall see me up in arms—against Corea's chief
I will unfurl my banners—his proud cities
Shall dread my thunder at their gates, and mourn
Their smoaking ramparts—o'er his verdant plains
And peaceful vales I'll drive my warlike car,
And deluge all the east with blood. [*Exit.*
Octar. Mirvan, do thou bear hence those miscreant slaves:
Thou, Zamti, art my charge.
[*Laying hold of him.*
Zamti. Willing I come— [*Shakes him off.*
The steady mind can scorn your mansions drear,
And brighten horror with its noon-tide ray.
Mandane, summon all thy strength. My son,
Thy father doubts not of thy fortitude.
[*Exit, guarded by* OCTAR.
Man. Allow me but one last embrace—
Hamet. Oh! mother, [*To the Guards.*
Would I could rescue thee!
Man. Lost, lost again!
Hamet. Inhuman, bloody Tartars!
Oh! farewell!——[*Both together.*]
[*Exeunt, on different sides.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Prison.* HAMET *in chains.*

Enter ZAPHIMRI, *(disguised in a Tartar dress) with* MIRVAN.

Mir. There stretched at length on the dark ground he lies,
Scorning his fate. Your meeting must be short.
Zaph. It shall——
Mir. And yet I tremble for the event:
Why would'st thou venture to this place of danger?
Zaph. And canst thou deem me, then, so mean of spirit,
To dwell secure in ignominious safety
With cold insensibility to wait
The lingering hours—with coward patience wait them,
Deliberating on myself, while ruin
Nods over Zamti's house?
Mir. Yet whilst thou art here,
Thy fate's suspended on each dreadful moment.
Zaph. I will hold converse with him, even though death
Were armed against the interview. [*Exit* MIR.
Hamet. [*Still on the ground.*] What wouldst thou, Tartar?
Zaph. Rise, noble youth——no vulgar errand mine——
Hamet. [*Comes forward.*] Now speak thy purpose.
Zaph. Under this disguise——

Hamet. If under that disguise, a murderer's dagger
Thirst for my blood—thus I can meet the blow.
[*Throwing himself open.*
Zaph. No ruffian's purpose lurks within this bosom.
To these lone walls, where oft the Scythian stabber,
With murderous stride, hath come; these walls that oft
Have seen the assassin's deeds—I bring a mind
Firm, virtuous, upright. Under this vile garb,
Lo! here a son of China. [*Opens his dress.*
Hamet. Yes, thy garb
Denotes a son of China; and those eyes
Roll with no black intent. Say on.
Zaph. Inflamed with admiration of heroic deeds,
I come to seek acquaintance with the youth,
Who for his king would bravely die.
Hamet. Say then,
Dost thou applaud the deed?
Zaph. By Heaven, I do.
Yes, virtuous envy rises in my soul—
Thy ardour charms me, and even now I pant
To change conditions with thee.
Hamet. Then my heart
Accepts thy proffered friendship. In a base,
A prone, degenerate age, when foreign force
And foreign manners have o'erwhelmed us all
And sunk our native genius—thou retain'st
A sense of antient worth. But wherefore here,
To this sad mansion, this abode of sorrow,
Com'st thou to know a wretch that soon must die?
Zaph. By Heaven, thou shalt not die—I come to speak
The gladsome tidings of a happier fate.
By me Zaphimri sends——
Hamet. Zaphimri sends!
Kind powers! Where is the king?
Zaph. His steps are safe;
Unseen as is the arrow's path. By me he says,
He knows, he loves, he wonders at thy virtue.
By me he swears, rather than thou should'st fall,
He will emerge from dark obscurity,
And greatly brave his fate.
Hamet. Ha! die for me!
For me, ignoble in the scale of being!
An unimportant wretch! Whoe'er thou art,
I prithee, stranger, bear my answer back—
Oh! tell my sovereign that here dwells a heart
Superior to all peril. When I fall,
A worm—an insect dies! But in his life
Are wrapped the glories of our ancient line,
The liberties of China! Then let him
Live for his people—be it mine to die.
Zaph. Can I bear this, ye powers, and not dissolve
In tears of gratitude and love? [*Aside.*
Hamet. Why streams
That flood of grief? and why that stifled groan?
Through the dark mist his sorrow casts around him,
He seems no common man. Say, generous youth,
Who, and what art thou?
Zaph. Who, and what am I?
Thou lead'st me to a precipice, from whence
Downward to look, turns wild the maddening brain,
Scared at the unfathomable deep below.
Who, and what am I? Oh! the veriest wretch,
That ever yet groaned out his soul in anguish!
One lost, abandoned, hopeless, plunged in woe
Beyond redemption's aid. To tell thee all
In one dire word, big with the last distress,
In one accumulated term of horror——
Zaphimri!——
Hamet. Said'st thou!——
Zaph. He!—that fatal wretch,
Exalted into misery supreme.
Oh! I was happy, while, good Zamti's son,
I walked the common tracts of life, and strove
Humbly to copy my imagined sire.
But now——
Hamet. Yes, now—if thou art he—as sure
'Tis wondrous like—raised to a state, in which
A nation's happiness on thee depends—
Zaph. A nation's happiness! There, there I bleed!
There are my pangs! For me this war began,
For me hath purple slaughter drenched yon fields;
I am the cause of all. I forged those chains—
For Zamti and Mandane too—Oh! Heavens!—
Them have I thrown into a dungeon's gloom.
These are the horrors of Zaphimri's reign.
I am the tyrant!—I ascend the throne,
By trampling on the neck of innocence—
By base ingratitude! by the vile means
Of selfish cowardice, that can behold
Thee, and thy father, mother, all in chains,
All lost, all murdered, that I thence may rise
Inglorious to a throne!
Hamet. Alas! thy spirit,
Thy wild disordered fancy pictures forth
Ills that are not—or, being ills, not worth
A moment's pause.
Zaph. Not ills! Thou canst not mean it.
Oh! I'm environed with the worst of woes!
The angry fates, amidst their hoards of vengeance,
Had nought but this—they meant to render me
Peculiarly distressed. Tell me, thou gallant youth—
A soul like thine knows every fine emotion—
Is there a nerve, in which the heart of man
Can prove such torture, as when thus it meets
Unequalled friendship, honour, truth, and love,
And no return can make?——Oh! 'tis too much,
Ye mighty gods, too much—thus, thus to be
A feeble prince, a shadow of a king,
Without the power to wreak revenge on guilt,
Without the power of doing virtue right!
Hamet. That power will come.
Zaph. But when?—when thou art lost,
When Zamti and Mandane are destroyed.
Oh for a dagger's point, to plunge it deep,
Deep in this—ha! deep in the tyrant's heart!
Hamet. There your revenge should point.
For that great deed

Heaven hath watched all thy ways; and wilt thou, now,
With headlong rage spurn at its guardian care,
Nor wait the movements of eternal justice?
Zaph. Ha!—whither has my phrenzy strayed? Yes, Heaven
Has been all-bounteous. Righteous powers!
To you my orisons are due—But oh!
Complete your goodness: save this valiant youth:
Save Zamti's house; and then—if such your will,
That from the Tartar's head my arm this night
Shall grasp the crown of China—teach me, then,
To bear your dread vicegerency—I stand
Resigned to your high will.
Hamet. And Heaven, I trust,
Will still preserve thee; in its own good time
Will finish its decrees.
Zaph. Yes, Hamet, yes;
A gleam of hope remains. Should Timurkan
Defer his murder to the midnight hour,
Then will I come, then burst these guilty walls,
Rend those vile manacles, and give thee freedom.
Hamet. Oh! no—you must not risk.
Zaph. A band of heroes
For this are ready; honourably leagued
To vindicate their rights. Thy father's care
Planned and inspired the whole. Among the troops,
Nay, in his very guards, there are not wanting
Some gallant sons of China, in that hour,
Who will discover their long pent-up fury,
And deal destruction round.
Hamet. What—all convened,
And every thing disposed?
Zaph. Determined!—Now
In silent terror all intent they stand,
And wait the signal in each gale that blows.
Hamet. Why didst thou venture forth?
Zaph. What! poorly lurk
While my friends die!—that thought—but, generous youth,
I'll not think meanly of thee—No—that thought
Is foreign to thy heart.
Hamet. But think, my prince,
On China's wrongs, the dying heroes' groans;
Think on thy ancestors.
Zaph. My ancestors!
What is't to me a long-descended line,
A race of worthies, legislators, heroes,
Unless I bring their virtues too? No more—
Thy own example fires me. Near this place
I'll take my stand, and watch their busy motions,
Until the general roar; then will I come,
And arm thee for th e assault.
Hamet. Oh! if thou dost,
Yet once again I'll wield the deathful blade,
And bear against the foe.
Zaph. Yes, thou and I
Will rush together through the paths of death,
Mow down our way, and with sad overthrow
Pursue the Tartar—like two rushing torrents,
That from the mountain's top, 'midst roaring caves,
'Midst rocks and rent-up trees, foam headlong down,
And each depopulates his way.——
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
Hamet. What means
That sudden and wild harmony?
Zaph. Even now
The conqueror, and his fell barbaric rout,
For this day's victory indulge their joy;
Joy soon to end in groans—for all conspires
To forward our design—and lo! the lights
That whilom blazed to heaven, now rarely seen,
Shed a pale glimmer, and the foe secure
Sinks down in deep debauch; while, all awake,
The genius of this land broods o'er the work
Of justice and revenge.
Hamet. Oh! revel on!
Still unsuspecting plunge in guilty joy,
And bury thee in riot!
Zaph. Ne'er again
To wake from that vile trance—for, ere the dawn,
Detested spoiler, thy hot blood shall smoke
On the stained marble, and thy limbs abhorred
I'll scatter to the dogs of China.

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Break off your conference—Octar this way comes.
Zaph. This garb will cloak me from ech hostile eye;
Thou need'st not fear detection.

Enter OCTAR.

Mir. There's your prisoner.
[*Pointing to* HAMET.
Octar. Lead him to where Mandane's matron grief
Rings through yon vaulted roof.
Hamet. Oh! lead me to her!
Let me give balm to her afflicted mind,
And soften anguish in a parent's breast.
[*Exit with* MIRVAN.
Zaph. What may this mean? I dread some lurking mischief.
[*Exit on the opposite side.*
Octar. When the boy clings around his mother's heart
In fond endearment, then to tear him from her,
Will once again awaken all her tenderness,
And, in her impotence of grief, the truth
At length will burst its way. But Timurkan
Impatient comes.

Enter TIMURKAN.

Thus with disordered looks,
Why will my sovereign shun the genial banquet,
To seek a dungeon's gloom?
Timur. Oh, valiant Octar!
A more than midnight gloom involves my soul.
Hast thou beheld this stubborn mandarin?
Octar. I have; and tried, by every threatened vengeance,
To bend his soul: unconquered yet by words,
He smiles contempt; as if some inward joy,
Like the sun, labouring in a night of clouds,

Shot forth its gladdening unresisted beams,
Cheering the face of woe.
Timur. What of Mandane?
Octar. At first with tears and bitter lamentations,
She called on Hamet lost; but when I urged,
She still might save her boy, and save herself,
Would she but give Zaphimri to your wrath,
Her tears forgot to flow: her voice, her look,
Her colour sudden changed, and all her form,
Enlarging with the emotions of her soul,
Grew vaster to the sight. With blood-shot eyes
She cast a look of silent indignation,
Then turned in sullen mood away.
Timur. Perdition
O'erwhelm her pride!
Octar. Might I advise you, sir,
An artful tale of love should softly glide
To her afflicted soul—a conqueror's sighs
Will waft a thousand wishes to her heart,
Till female vanity aspire to reach
The eastern throne; and when her virtue melts
In the soft tumult of her gay desires,
Win from her every truth, then spurn to shame
The weak, deluded woman.
Timur. Octar, no:
I cannot stoop with love-sick adulation
To thrill in languishing desire, and try
The hopes, the fears, and the caprice of love.
Inured to rougher scenes, far other arts
My mind employed; to sling the well-stored quiver
Over this manly arm, and wing the dart
At the fleet rein-deer, sweeping down the vale,
Or up the mountain, straining every nerve;
To vault the neighing steed, and urge his course
Swifter than whirlwinds; through the ranks of war
To drive my chariot-wheels, smoking with gore:
These are my passions, this my only science,
Above the puling sicknesses of love.
Bring that vile slave, the hoary priest, before me.
[*Exit* OCTAR.
By Heaven, their fortitude erects a fence,
To shield them from my wrath, more powerful far
Than their high-boasted wall, which long hath stood
The shock of time, of war, of storms, and thunder,
The wonder of the world!
What art thou, Virtue, who can'st thus inspire
This stubborn pride, this dignity of soul,
And still unfading, beauteous in distress,
Can'st taste of joys my heart hath never known?

Enter ZAMTI, *in Chains.*

Mark me, thou traitor! thy detested sight
Once more I brook, to try if yet the sense
Of deeds, abhorred as thine, has touched your soul.
Or clear this mystery, or, by yonder Heaven,
I'll hunt Zaphimri to his secret haunt,
Or spread a general carnage round the world.
Zamti. Thy rage is vain—far from thy ruthless power
Kind Heaven protects him, till the awful truth,
In some dread hour of horror and revenge,
Shall burst, like thunder, on thee.
Timur. Ha! beware——
Nor rouse my lion-rage—yet, ere 'tis late,
Repent thee of thy crimes.
Zamti. The crime would be
To yield to thy unjust commands. But know,
A louder voice than thine forbids the deed;
The voice of all my kings! Forth from their tombs,
Even now, they send a peal of groans to Heaven,
Where all thy murders are long since gone up,
And stand in dread array against thee.
Timur. Murders!
Ungrateful mandarin! Say, did not I,
When civil discord lighted up her brand,
And scattered wide her flames—when fierce contention
'Twixt Xohohamti and Zaphimri's father
Sorely convulsed the realm—did not I, then,
Lead forth my Tartars from their northern frontier,
And bid fair order rise?
Zamti. Bid order rise!
Hast thou not smote us with a hand of wrath?
By thee each art has died, and every science
Gone out at thy fell blast. Art thou not come
To sack our cities, to subvert our temples,
The temples of our gods, and with the worship,
The monstrous worship, of your living Lama,
Profane our holy shrines?
Timur. Peace, insolent!
Nor dare, with horrid treason, to provoke
The wrath of injured majesty.
Zamti. Yes, tyrant!
Yes, thou hast smote us with a hand of wrath,
Full twenty years hast smote us; but at length
Will come the hour of Heaven's just visitation,
When thou shalt rue——hear me, thou man of blood——
Yes, thou shalt rue the day, when thy fell rage
Imbrued those hands in royal blood. Now tremble—
The arm of the Most High is barred against thee—
And see!—the hand of fate describes thy doom,
In glaring letters, on yon rubied wall!
Each gleam of light is perished out of Heaven,
And darkness rushes o'er the face of earth.
Timur. Think'st thou, vile slave, with visionary fears,
I e'er can shrink appalled? Thou moon-struck seer!
No more I'll bear this mockery of words:
Or straight resolve me, or, by hell and vengeance,
Unheard-of torment waits thee!
Zamti. Know'st thou not
I offered up my boy? And after that,
After that conflict, think'st thou there is aught
Zamti has left to fear?—
Timur. Yes; learn to fear
My will, my sovereign will, which here is law,

And treads upon the neck of slaves.
Zamti. Thy will
The law in China! Ill-instructed man!
Now learn an awful truth—Though ruffian power
May for a while suppress all sacred order,
And trample on the rights of man, the soul,
Which gave our legislation life and vigour,
Shall still subsist, above the tyrant's reach:——
The spirit of the laws can never die.
Timur. I'll hear no more. What, ho!

Enter OCTAR *and Guards.*

Bring forth Mandane——
Ruin involves ye all—this very hour
Shall see your son impaled: yes, both your sons.
Let Etan be brought forth.
Octar. Etan, my liege,
Is fled for safety.
Timur. Thou pernicious slave! [*To* ZAMTI.
Him, too, would'st thou withdraw from justice? him
Wouldst thou send hence to Corea's realm, to brood
O'er some new work of treason? By the powers
Who feel a joy in vengeance, and delight
In human blood, I will unchain my fury
On all, who trace Zaphimri in his years!
But chief on thee and thy devoted race.

Enter MANDANE *and* HAMET. MIRVAN *guarding them, &c.*

Timur. Woman, attend my words——instant reveal
This dark conspiracy, and save thyself.
If, wilful, thou wilt spurn the joys that woo thee,
The rack shall have its prey.
Man. It is in vain.
I tell thee, homicide, my soul is bound
By solemn vows: and would'st thou have me break,
What angels wafted on their wings to Heaven?
Timur. Renounce your rash resolves, nor court destruction.
Man. Goddess of vengeance! from your realms above,
Where near the throne of the Most High thou dwell'st,
Insphered in darkness, amidst hoards of thunder,
Serenely dreadful, till dire human crimes
Provoke thee down; now, on the whirlwind's wing
Descend, and, with your flaming sword, your bolts,
Red with almighty wrath, let loose your rage,
And blast this vile seducer in his guilt!
Timur. Blind frantic woman!—think on your loved boy.
Man. That tender struggle's o'er—if he must die,
I'll greatly dare to follow.
Timur. Then, forthwith
I'll put thee to the proof—Drag forth the boy
To instant death— [*They seize* HAMET.
Hamet. Come on, then—Lead me hence
To some new world where justice reigns; for here
Thy iron hand is stretched o'er all.
[*Exit guarded.*
Timur. Quick, drag him forth.
Man. Now, by the powers above, by every tie
Of humanizing pity, seize me first;
Oh! spare my child, and end his wretched mother!
Timur. Thou plead'st in vain.

Enter a Messenger in haste.

Mess. Etan, dread sir, is found.
Zamti. Ah! China totters on the brink of ruin! [*Aside.*
Timur. Where lurked the slave?
Mess. Emerging from disguise,
He rushed amid the guards that led forth Hamet:
'Suspend the stroke,' he cried: then craved admittance
To your dread presence, on affairs, he says,
Of highest import to your throne and life.
Zamti. Ruin impends! [*Aside.*] Heed not an idle boy.— [*To* TIMURKAN.
Timur. Yes, I will see him: bring him straight before me.
Zamti. Angels of light! quick on the rapid wing
Dart from the throne of grace, and hover round him!

Enter ZAPHIMRI, *Guards following him.*

Timur. Thou com'st on matters of importance deep
Unto my throne and life—
Zaph. I do. This very hour
Thy death is plotting.
Timur. Ha!—by whom?
Zaph. Zaphimri!
Zamti. What means my son!—
Timur. Quick, give him to my rage,
And mercy shall to thee extend.
Zaph. Think not
I meanly come to save this wretched being.
Pity Mandane—save her tender frame! [*Kneels.*
Pity that youth!—Oh! save that godlike man!
Zamti. Wilt thou dishonour me, degrade thyself,
Thy native dignity, by basely kneeling?
Quit that vile posture.
Timur. Rash intruder, hence— [*To* ZAMTI.
Hear me, thou stripling; or unfold thy tale,
Or by yon heaven they die——Wouldst thou appease my wrath,
Bring me Zaphimri's head.
Zaph. Will that suffice?
Zamti. Oh! Heavens! [*Aside.*
Timur. It will—
Zaph. Then take it, tyrant.
[*Rising up, and pointing to himself.*
Zamti and Hamet. Ah!—
Zaph. I am Zaphimri—I your mortal foe!
Zamti. Now, by yon heaven, it is not—
Zaph. Here—strike here—
Since nought but royal blood can quench thy thirst,
Unsluice these veins—but spare their matchless lives.
Timur. Wouldst thou deceive me too?

Zamti. He would—
Zaph. No—here,
Here on his knees, Zaphimri begs to die.
Zamti. Oh! horror, 'tis my son! by great Confucius,
That is my Etan, my too generous boy,
That fain would die to save his aged sire!
Man. Alas! all's ruined——freedom is no more! [*Aside.*
Zaph. Yet hear me, Tartar—hear the voice of truth—
I am your victim—by the gods, I am.
[*Laying hold of* TIMURKAN.
Timur. Thou early traitor! by your guilty sire
Trained up in fraud—no more these arts prevail.
My rage is up in arms, ne'er to know rest,
Until Zaphimri perish. Off, vile slave!
This very moment sweep them from my sight.
Man. Alas! my husband—Oh! my son—my son!
Zamti. May all the host of Heaven protect him still!
[*Exeunt* ZAMTI *and* MANDANE, *guarded by* OCTAR, *&c.*

ZAPHIMRI, *struggling with* TIMURKAN, *on his knees.*

Zaph. Ah! yet withhold—In pity hold a moment—
I am Zaphimri—I resign my crown—
Timur. Away, vain boy! Go see them bleed; behold
How they will writhe in pangs; pangs doomed for thee,
And every stripling through the east. Vile slave, away! [*Breaks from him, and exit.*

ZAPHIMRI, *lying on the ground; officers and guards behind him.*

Oh! cruel! yet a moment—barbarous Scythians!
Wilt thou not open, earth, and take me down,
Down to thy caverns of eternal darkness,
From this supreme of woe? Here will I lie,
Here, on thy flinty bosom—with this breast
I'll harrow up my grave, and end at once
This powerless wretch—this ignominious king!
And sleeps almighty justice? Will it not
Now waken all its terrors? arm yon band
Of secret heroes with avenging thunder?
By Heaven that thought [*Rising*] lifts up my kindling soul
With renovated fire. [*Aside.*] My glorious friends,
(Who now convene big with your country's fate)
When I am dead—oh! give me just revenge!
Let not my shade rise unatoned amongst ye;
Let me not die inglorious; make my fall,
With some great act of yet unheard-of vengeance,
Resound throughout the world, that farthest Scythia
May stand appalled at the huge distant roar
Of one vast ruin tumbling on the heads
Of this fell tyrant, and his hated race!
[*Exit, guarded.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Palace.*

Enter OCTAR, ZAMTI *and* MANDANE *following him.*

Zamti. Why dost thou lead us to this hated mansion?
Must we again behold the tyrant's frown?
Thou know'st our hearts are fixed.
Octar. The war of words
We scorn again to wage: thither ye come
Beneath a monarch's eye to meet your doom.
The rack is now preparing: Timurkan
Shall soon behold your pangs, and count each groan
Even to the fullest luxury of vengeance.
Guard well that passage: [*To the guards within.*] See these traitors find
No means of flight; while to the conqueror
I hasten, to receive his last commands.
[*Exit* OCTAR, *on the opposite side.*
Zamti. Thou ever faithful creature!
Man. Can'st thou, Zamti,
Still call me faithful? By that honoured name
Wilt thou call her, whose wild maternal love
Hath overwhelmed us all?
Zamti. Thou art my wife,
Whose matchless excellence, even in bondage,
Hath cheered my soul; but now thy every charm,
By virtue wakened, kindled by distress
To higher lustre, all my passions beat
Unutterable gratitude and love.
And must—oh! cruel! must I see thee bleed?
Man. For me death wears no terror on his brow.
Full twenty years hath this resounding breast
Been smote with these sad hands; these haggard eyes
Have seen my country's fall; my dearest husband,—
My son,—my king—all in the Tartar's hands:
What then remains for me? Death! only death.
Zamti. Ah! can thy tenderness endure the pangs
Inventive cruelty even now designs?—
Must this fair form—this soft perfection bleed?
Thy decent limbs be strained with cruel cords
To glut a ruffian's rage?—

Man. Alas! this frame,
This feeble texture never can sustain it.
But this—this I can bear— [*Shews a dagger.*
Zamti. Ha!
Man. Yes! this dagger!
Do thou but lodge it in this faithful breast,
My heart shall spring to meet thee.
Zamti. Oh!—
Man. Do thou,
My honoured lord, who taught me every virtue,
Afford this friendly, this last human office,
And teach me now to die.
Zamti. Oh! never—never—
Hence let me bear this fatal instrument.
[*Takes the dagger.*
What, to usurp the dread prerogative
Of life and death, and measure out the thread
Of our own beings! 'tis the coward's act,
Who dares not to encounter pain and peril.
Be that the practice of the untutored savage;
Be it the practice of the gloomy North.
Man. Must we, then, wait a haughty tyrant's nod,
The vassals of his will! No! let us rather
Nobly break through the barriers of this life,
And join the beings of some other world,
Who'll throng around our greatly daring souls,
And view the deed with wonder and applause.
Zamti. Distress too exquisite! Ye holy pow'rs!
If aught below can supersede your law,
And plead for wretches, who dare, self-impelled,
Rush to your awful presence; Oh! it is not
When the distempered passions rage, when pride
Is stung to madness, when ambition falls
From his high scaffolding; Oh! no. If aught
Can justify the blow, it is when Virtue
Has nothing left to do; when Liberty
No more can breathe at large; 'tis with the groans
Of our dear country when we dare to die.
Man. Then here at once direct the friendly steel.
Zamti. One last adieu! now!—ah! does this become
Thy husband's love? thus, with uplifted blade,
Can I approach that bosom-bliss, where oft
With other looks than these—Oh! my Mandane!
I've hushed my cares within thy sheltering arms!
Man. Alas! the loves, that hovered o'er our pillows,
Have spread their pinions, never to return,
And the pale fates surround us!
Then lay me down in honourable rest:
Come, as thou art, all hero, to my arms,
And free a virtuous wife.
Zamti. It must be so
Now, then, prepare thee—My arm flags and droops,
Conscious of thee in every trembling nerve.
[*Dashes down the dagger.*
By Heaven, once more I would not raise the point
Against that hoard of sweets, for endless years
Of universal empire.
Man. Ha! the fell ministers of wrath—and yet
They shall not long insult us in our woes.
Myself will still preserve the means of death.
[*Takes up the dagger.*

Enter TIMURKAN *and* OCTAR.

Timur. Now, then, detested pair, your hour is come—
Drag forth these slaves to instant death and torment.
I hate this dull delay; I burn to see them
Gasping in death, and weltering in their gore.
Man. Zamti, support my steps—with thee to die
Is all the boon Mandane now would crave.
[*Exeunt* MANDANE *and* ZAMTI.
Timur. Those rash, presumptuous boys, are they brought forth?
Octar. Mirvan will lead the victims to their fate.
Timur. And yet what boots their death? the Orphan lives,
And in this breast fell horror and remorse
Must be the dire inhabitants. Oh! Octar,
These midnight visions shake my inmost soul!
Octar. And shall the shadowings of a feverish brain
Disturb a conqueror's breast?
Timur. Octar, they've made
Such desolation here—'tis drear and horrible!
On yonder couch, soon as sleep closed my eyes,
All that yon mad enthusiastic priest
In mystic rage denounced, rose to my view;
And ever and anon a livid flash,
From conscience shot, shewed to my aching sight
The colours of my guilt—
Billows of blood were round me; and the ghosts,
The ghosts of heroes, by my rage destroyed,
Came with their ghastly orbs, and streaming wounds.
They stalked around my bed; with loud acclaim
They called Zaphimri! 'midst the lightning's blaze
Heaven rolled consenting thunders o'er my head;
Straight from his covert the youth sprung upon me,
And shook his gleaming steel—he hurled me down,
Down, headlong down the drear——Hold, hold! where am I?
Oh! this dire whirl of thought—my brain's on fire!
Octar. Compose this wild disorder of thy soul.
Your foes this moment die.

Enter MIRVAN.

Timur. What wouldst thou, Mirvan?
Mir. Near to the eastern gate, a slave reports,
As on his watch he stood, a gleam of arms
Cast a dim lustre through the night; and straight
The steps of men thick sounded in his ear:
In close array they marched.

Timur. Some lurking treason!—
What, ho! my arms—ourself will sally forth.
Mir. My liege, their scanty and rash-levied crew
Want not a monarch's sword—the valiant Octar,
Joined by yon faithful guard, will soon chastise them.
Timur. Then be it so—Octar, draw off the guard,
And bring their leaders, bound in chains, before me. [*Exit* OCTAR.
Mir. With sure conviction we have further learned
The long-contended truth—Etan's their king—
The traitor Zamti counted but one son;
And him he sent far hence to Corea's realm,
That, should it e'er be known the prince survived,
The boy might baffle justice.
Timur. Ha! this moment
Ourself will see him fall.
Mir. Better, my liege,
At this dead hour you sought repose—meantime
Justice on him shall hold her course. Your foes
Else might still urge that you delight in blood.
The semblance of humanity will throw
A veil upon ambition's deeds—'tis thus
That mighty conquerors thrive; and even vice,
When it would prosper, borrows virtue's mien.
Timur. Mirvan, thou counsell'st right: beneath a shew
Of public weal we lay the nations waste.
And yet these eyes shall never know repose,
Till they behold Zaphimri perish. Mirvan,
Attend me forth.
Mir. Forgive, my sovereign liege,
Forgive my over-forward zeal—I knew
It was not fitting he should breathe a moment:
The truth once known, I rushed upon the victim,
And, with this sabre, cleft him to the ground.
Timur. Thanks to great Lama! treason is no more,
And their boy king is dead. Mirvan, do thou
This very night bring me the stripling's head.
Soon as the dawn shall purple yonder east,
Aloft, in air, all China shall behold it,
Parched by the sun, and weltering to the wind:
Haste, Mirvan, haste, and sate my fondest wish.
Mir. This hour approves my loyalty and truth. [*Exit.*
Timur. Their deep-laid plot hath missed its aim, and Timurkan
May reign secure. No longer horrid dreams
Shall hover round my couch: the prostrate world
Henceforth shall learn to own my sovereign sway.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, Mirvan, hast thou brought the wished-for pledge?
Mir. My liege, I fear 'twill strike thy soul with horror!
Timur. By Heaven, the sight will glad my longing eyes!
Oh! give it to me!

Enter ZAPHIMRI *(a sabre in his hand) and plants himself before the Tyrant.*

Ha! then all is lost.
Zaph. Now, bloody Tartar, now then, know Zaphimri!
Timur. Accursed treason! To behold thee thus
Alive before me, blasts my aching eye-balls:
My blood forgets to move; each power dies in me.
Zaph. Well may'st thou tremble, well may guilt like thine
Shrink back appalled; for now avenging Heaven
In me sends forth its minister of wrath,
To deal destruction on thee.
Timur. Treacherous slave!
'Tis false—with coward art, a base assassin,
A midnight ruffian, on my peaceful hour
Secure thou com'st, thus to assault a warrior
Thy heart could never dare to meet in arms.
Zaph. Not meet thee, Tartar? ha! in me thou seest
One on whose head unnumbered wrongs thou'st heaped;
Else could I scorn thee, thus defenceless. Yes,
By all my great revenge, could bid thee try each shape,
Assume each horrid form, come forth arrayed
In all the terrors of destructive guilt;
But now a dear, a murdered father calls;
He lifts my arm to rivet thee to earth,
The avenger of mankind.
Mir. Fall on, my prince.
Timur. By Heaven, I'll dare thee still. Resign it, slave,
Resign thy blade to nobler hands.
[*Snatches* MIRVAN'S *sabre.*
Mir. Oh! horror!
What, ho! bring help!—Let not the fate of China
Hang on the issue of a doubtful combat.
Timur. Come on, presumptuous boy!
Zaph. Inhuman regicide!
Now, lawless ravager, Zaphimri comes
To wreak his vengeance on thee.
[*Exeunt fighting.*
Mir. Oh! nerve his arm, ye powers, and guide each blow!

Enter HAMET.

Mir. See there! behold—he darts upon his prey.
Zaph. [*within.*] Die, bloodhound, die!
Timur. [*within.*] May curses blast my arm,
That failed so soon!
Hamet. The Tartar drops his point,
Zaphimri now——
Timur. [*within.*] Have mercy! mercy! oh!
Zaph. [*within.*] Mercy was never thine. This, fell destroyer,
This, for a nation's groans!
Mir. The monster dies;
He quivers on the ground. Then let me fly

To Zamti and Mandane with the tidings,
And call them back to liberty and joy.
[*Exit* MIRVAN.

Enter ZAPHIMRI.

Zaph. Now, Hamet, now oppression is no more:
This smoking blade hath drunk the tyrant's blood.
Hamet. China again is free! There lies the corse
That breathed destruction to the world.
Zaph. Yes, there,
Tyrannic guilt, behold thy fatal end,
The wages of thy sins.

Enter MORAT.

Morat. Where is the king?
Revenge now stalks abroad. Our valiant leaders,
True to the destined hour, at once broke forth
From every quarter on the astonished foe:
Octar is fallen; all covered o'er with wounds
He met his fate; and still the slaughtering sword
Invades the city, sunk in sleep and wine.
Zaph. Lo! Timurkan lies levelled with the dust!
Send forth, and let Orasming straight proclaim
Zaphimri king—my subjects' rights restored.
[*Exit* MORAT.
Now, where is Zamti? where Mandane?—ha!
What means that look of wan despair?

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Oh! dire mischance!
While here I trembled for the great event,
The unrelenting slaves, whose trade is death,
Began their work. Nor piety, nor age,
Could touch their felon-hearts; they seized on Zamti,
And bound him on the wheel. All frantic at the sight,
Mandane plunged a poniard in her heart,
And at her husband's feet expired.
Hamet. Oh! heavens!.
My mother!
Zaph. Fatal rashness!—Mirvan, say,
Is Zamti, too, destroyed?
Mir. Smiling in pangs,
We found the good, the venerable man:
Released from anguish, with what strength remained,
He reached the couch where lost Mandane lay;
There threw his mangled limbs; there, clinging to the body,
Prints thousand kisses on her clay-cold lips,
And pours his sad lamentings, in a strain
Might call each pitying angel from the sky,
To sympathize with human woe.
[*The great folding-doors open in the back scene.*
Zaph. And see,
See on that mournful bier he clasps her still:
Still hangs upon each faded feature; still
To her deaf ear complains in bitter anguish.
Heart-piercing sight!
Hamet. Oh! agonizing scene!
[*The corse is brought forward,* ZAMTI *lying on the couch, and clasping the dead body.*
Zamti. Ah! stay, Mandane, stay!—yet once again
Let me behold the day-light of thy eyes!——
Gone, gone—for ever, ever gone! Those orbs,
That ever gently beamed, must dawn no more!
Zaph. Are these our triumphs?—these our promised joys?
Zamti. The music of that voice recalls my soul.
[*Rises from the body, and runs eagerly to embrace* ZAPHIMRI; *his strength fails him, and he falls at his feet.*
My prince! my king!
Zaph. Soft, raise him from the ground.
Zamti. Zaphimri!—Hamet too!—Oh! blessed event!
I could not hope such tidings—Thee, my prince—
Thee, too, my son—I thought ye both destroyed.
My slow remains of life cannot endure
These strong vicissitudes of grief and joy.
And there—Oh! Heaven!—see there, there lies Mandane!
Hamet. How fares it now, my father?
Zamti. Lead me to her——
Is that the ever dear, the faithful woman?
Is that my wife?—And is it thus at length,
Thus do I see thee then, Mandane?—Cold,
Alas! death-cold——
Cold is that breast, where virtue from above
Made its delighted sojourn, and those lips
That uttered heavenly truth—pale! pale!—dead, dead! [*Sinks on the body.*
Pray ye, entomb me with her!
Zaph. Then take, ye Powers, then take your conquests back;
Zaphimri never can survive——
Zamti. [*Raising himself.*] I charge thee, live:
A base desertion of the public weal
Can ne'er become a king.—Alas! my son——
(By that dear tender name, if once again
Zamti may call thee)—tears will have their way!
Forgive this flood of tenderness: my heart
Melts even now! Thou noble youth, this is
The only interview we e'er shall have.
Zaph. And will ye then, inexorable powers,
Will ye then tear him from my aching heart!
Zamti. The moral duties of the private man
Are grafted in thy soul—Oh! still remember
The mean immutable of happiness,
Or in the vale of life, or on a throne,
Is virtue. Each bad action of a king
Extends beyond his life, and acts again
Its tyranny o'er ages yet unborn.
To error mild, severe to guilt, protect
The helpless innocent; and learn to feel
The best delight of serving human kind.
Be these, my prince, thy arts: be these thy cares,
And live the father of a willing people.
Hamet. Oh! cruel!—see—ah see!—he dies!—his lips
Tremble in agony—his eye-balls glare!—
A death-like paleness spreads o'er all his face!
Zaph. Is there no help to save so dear a life?

Zamti. It is too late—I die—alas! I die!—
Life harassed out, pursued with barbarous art,
Through every trembling joint—now fails at once!
Zaphimri—oh! farewell!—I shall not see
The glories of thy reign.—Hamet!—my son—
Thou good young man, farewell!—Mandane, yes,
My soul with pleasure takes her flight, that thus
Faithful in death, I leave these cold remains
Near thy dear honoured clay. [*Dies.*

Zaph. And art thou gone,
Thou best of men?—Then must Zaphimri pine
In ever-during grief, since thou art lost;
Since that firm patriot, whose parental care
Should raise, should guide, should animate my virtues,
Lies there a breathless corse.

Hamet. My liege, forbear:
Live for your people; madness and despair
Belong to woes like mine.

Zaph. Thy woes, indeed,
Are deep, thou pious youth—yes, I will live,
To soften thy afflictions; to assuage
A nation's grief, when such a pair expires.
Come to my heart:—in thee, another Zamti
Shall bless the realm. Now let me hence to hail
My people with the sound of peace; that done,
To these a grateful monument shall rise,
With all sepulchral honour. Frequent, there,
We'll offer incense;—there, each weeping muse
Shall grave the tributary verse;—with tears
Embalm their memories; and teach mankind,
Howe'er oppression stalk the groaning earth,
Yet Heaven, in its own hour, can bring relief;
Can blast the tyrant in his guilty pride,
And prove the Orphan's guardian to the last.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY MANDANE.

THRO' five long acts I've worn my sighing face,
Confin'd by critic laws to time and place;
Yet that once done I ramble as I please,
Cry London, hoy! and whisk o'er land and seas—
Ladies, excuse my dress—'tis true Chinese.
Thus, quit of husband, death, and tragic strain,
Let us enjoy our dear small-talk again.
How could this bard successful hope to prove?
So many heroes—and not one in love!
No suitor here to talk of flames that thrill;
To say the civil thing—"Your eyes so kill!"—
No ravisher to force us—to our will!
You've seen their eastern virtues, patriot passions,
And now for something of their taste and fashions.
"O Lord! that's charming, cries my lady Fidget,
I long to know it—do the creatures visit?
Dear Mrs Yates, do tell us—Well, how is it?"
First as to beauty—Set your hearts at rest—
They've all broad foreheads and pigs eyes at best.
And then they lead such strange, such formal lives!—
—A little more at home than English wives;
Lest the poor things should roam, and prove untrue,
They all are crippled in the tiny shoe;
A hopeful scheme to keep a wife from madding!
—We pinch our feet, and yet are ever gadding.
Then they've no cards, no routs, ne'er take the fling,
And pin-money is an unheard-of thing!
Then how d'ye think they write—You'll ne'er divine—
From top to bottom down in one straight line.
[*Mimics.*
We ladies, when our flames we cannot smother,
Write letters—from one corner to another.
One mode there is in which both climes agree;
I scarce can tell—'mongst friends then let it be—
The creatures love to cheat as well as we.
But, bless my wits! I've quite forgot the bard—
A civil soul!—By me he sends this card—
"Presents respects—to every lady here—
Hopes for the honour—of a single tear."
The critics then will throw their dirt in vain,
One drop from you will wash out every stain.
Acquaints you—(now the man is past his fright)
He holds his rout—and here he keeps his night.
Assures you all a welcome kind and hearty,
The ladies shall play crowns—and there's the shilling party.
[*Points to the upper gallery.*

ZENOBIA.

BY

MURPHY.

PROLOGUE.

Of old, when Rome, in a declining age,
Of lawless power had felt the barb'rous rage,
This was the tyrant's part—he gave a prize
To him who a new pleasure could devise.
Ye tyrants of the pit, whose cold disdain
Rejects and nauseates the repeated strain;
Who call for rarities to quicken sense,
Say, do you always the reward dispense?
Ye bards, to whom French wit gives kind relief,
Are ye not of the first—to cry, stop thief?
Say, to a brother do you e'er allow
One little sprig, one leaf to deck his brow?
No—fierce invective stuns the playwright's ears,
Wits, Poets-Corner, Ledgers, Gazetteers!
'Tis said the Tartar, ere he pierce the heart,
Inscribes his name upon the poisoned dart.
That scheme's rejected by each scribbling spark;
Our Christian system—stabs you in the dark.
And yet the desp'rate author of to-night
Dares, on the muse's wing, another flight;
Once more, a dupe to fame, forsakes his ease,
And feeds the ambition—here again to please.

He brings a tale from a far distant age,
Ennobled by the grave historic page!
Zenobia's woes have touched each polished state;
The brightest eyes of France have mourn'd her fate;
Harmonious Italy her tribute paid,
And sung a dirge to her lamented shade.
Yet think not that we mean to mock the eye
With pilfered colours of a foreign dye.
Not to translate, our bard his pen doth dip;
He takes a play, as Britons take a ship:
They heave her down: with many a sturdy stroke,
Repair her well, and build with heart of oak;
To every breeze set Britain's streamers free,
New-man her, and away again to sea.
This is our author's aim; and if his art
Waken to sentiment the feeling heart;
If in his scenes alternate passions burn,
And friendship, love, guilt, virtue, take their turn;
If innocence oppress'd lie bleeding here,
You'll give—'tis all he asks—one virtuous tear.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

PHARASMANES, *Usurper of Iberia.*
RHADAMISTUS, TERIBAZUS, *his Sons.*
ZOPIRON, TIGRANES, *Courtiers.*
MEGISTUS, *a Shepherd, Preserver of Zenobia's life.*

WOMEN.

ZENOBIA, *Wife to Rhadamistus.*
ZELMIRA, *Wife of Zopiron.*
Attendants, Guards, &c.

SCENE,—*Lies in Pharasmanes' Camp, on the Banks of the Araxes.*

ACT I.

SCENE

Zel. THROUGH the wide camp 'tis awful solitude!
On every tent, which, at the morning's dawn,
Rung with the din of arms, deep silence sits,
Adding new terrors to the dreadful scene!
My heart dies in me!—hark! with hideous roar
The turbulent Araxes foams along,
And rolls his torrent through yon depth of woods!
'Tis terrible to hear!—who's there?—Zopiron!

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zel. My lord, my husband!—help me; lend your aid!
Zop. Why didst thou leave thy tent?—Why thus afflict
Thy anxious breast, thou partner of my heart?
Why wilt thou thus distract thy tender nature
With groundless fears? Ere yonder sun shall visit
The western sky, all will be hushed to peace.
Zel. The interval is horrid; big with woe,
With consternation, peril, and dismay!
And oh! if here, while yet the fate of nations,
Suspended, hangs upon the doubtful sword,
If here the trembling heart thus shrink with horror,
Here in these tents, in this unpeopled camp,
Oh! think, Zopiron, in yon field of death,
Where numbers soon in purple heaps shall bleed,
What feelings there must throb in every breast?
How long, ambition, wilt thou stalk the earth,
And thus lay waste mankind!
Zop. This day, at length,
The warlike king, victorious Pharasmanes,
Closes the scene of war. The Roman bands
But ill can cope with the embattled numbers
Asia pours forth, a firm, undaunted host!
A nation under arms! and every bosom
To deeds of glory fired!—Iberia then———
Zel. Perish Iberia!—may the sons of Rome
Pour rapid vengeance on her falling ranks,
That he, who tramples on the rights of nature,
May see his vassals overwhelmed in ruin,
May from yon field be led in sullen chains,
To grace the triumph of imperial Rome,
And from the assembled senate humbly learn
The dictates of humanity and justice!
Zop. Thy generous zeal, thy every sentiment
Charms my delighted soul. But thou be cautious,
And check the rising ardour that inflames thee!
The tyrant spares nor sex nor innocence.——
Zel. Indignant of controul, he spurns each law,
Each holy sanction, that restrains the nations,
And forms 'twixt man and man the bond of peace.
Zop. This is the tyger's den; with human gore
For ever floats the pavement; with the shrieks
Of matrons weeping o'er their slaughtered sons,
The cries of virgins, to the brutal arms
Of violation dragged, with ceaseless groans
Of varied misery, for ever rings
The dreary region of his cursed domain.
Zel. To multiply his crimes, a beauteous captive,
The afflicted Ariana—she—for her,
For that fair excellence my bosom bleeds!
She, in the prime of every blooming grace,
When next the glowing hour of riot comes,
Shall fall a victim to his base desires.
Zop. The bounteous gods may succour virtue still!
In this day's battle, which perhaps ere now
The charging hosts have joined, should Roman valour
Prevail o'er Asia's numbers——
Zel. That event
Is all our hope. And lo! on yonder rampart,
Trembling with wild anxiety, she stands,
Invokes each god, and bids her straining eye
Explore the distant field.
Zop. Yes, there she's fixed
A statue of despair!——That tender bosom
Heaves with no common grief—I've marked her oft,
And, if I read aright, some mighty cause
Of hoarded anguish, some peculiar woe
Preys on her mind unseen!—But, ha! behold,
She faints; her fears, too powerful for her frame,
Sink that frail beauty drooping to the earth.
[*Exit hastily.*
Zel. Haste, fly, Zopiron, fly with instant succour;
Support her; help her;—lo! the attendant train
Have caught her in their arms!—Assist her, Heaven,
Assuage the sorrows of her gentle spirit!
Her fluttering sense returns;—and now this way
The virgins lead her. May the avenging gods,
In pity of the woes such virtue feels,
In pity of the wrongs a world endures,
With power resistless arm the Roman legions,
That they may hurl, in one collected blow,
Assured destruction on the tyrant's head!

Enter ZENOBIA, *leaning on two attendants.*

Zen. A little onward, still a little onward
Support my steps——
Zel. How fares it, madam, now?
Zen. My strength returns—I thank ye, generous maids,
And would I could requite you—fruitless thanks
Are all a wretch can give.
First attend. The gentle office

Of mild benevolence our nature prompts—
Your merit too commands :—on Ariana
We tend with willing, with delighted care,
And that delight o'erpays us for our trouble.
Zen. Your cares for me denote a heart that feels
For other's woes. Methinks, with strength renewed,
I could adventure forth again.
Second attend. 'Twere best
Repose your wearied spirits—we will seek
Yon rising ground, and bring the swiftest tidings
Of all the mingled tumult.
Zen. Go, my virgins;
Watch well each movement of the marshalled field;
Each turn of fortune;—let me know it all;
Each varying circumstance.
Zel. And will you thus,
Be doomed for ever, Ariana, thus
A willing prey to visionary ills,
The self-consuming votarist of care?
Zen. Alas! I'm doomed to weep—the wrath of Heaven,
With inexhausted vengeance, follows still,
And each day comes with aggravated woes.
Zel. Yet, when Iberia's king, when Pharasmanes,
With all a lover's fondness——
Zen. Name him not!
Name not a monster horrible with blood,
The widow's, orphan's, and the virgin's tears!
Zel. Yet, savage as he is, at sight of thee
Each fiercer passion softens into love.
To you he bends; the monarch of the east,
Dejected, droops beneath your cold disdain,
And all the tyranny of female pride.
Zen. That pride is virtue; virtue, that abhors
The tyrant reeking from a brother's murder!
Oh! Mithridates! ever honoured shade!
Peaceful he reigned, dispensing good around him,
In the mild eve of honourable days!
Through all her peopled realm Armenia felt
His equal sway: The sunset of his power,
With fainter beams, but undiminished glory,
Still shone serene; while every conscious subject,
With tears of praise, beheld his calm decline,
And blessed the parting ray!—yet then, Zelmira,
Oh, fact accursed!—yes, Pharasmanes then—
Detested perfidy! nor ties of blood,
Nor sacred laws, nor the just gods, restrain him—
In the dead midnight hour, the fell assassin
Rushed on the slumber of the virtuous man;
His life blood gushed! The venerable king
Waked, saw a brother armed against his life—
Forgave him, and expired!
Zel. Yet wherefore open
Afresh the wounds, which time long since hath closed?
This day confirms the sceptre in his hand—
Zen. Confirms his sceptre—his!——indignant gods!
Will no red vengeance, from your stores of wrath,
Burst down to crush the tyrant in his guilt?
His sceptre, saidst thou?——urge that word no more——
The sceptre of his son!—the solemn right
Of Rhadamistus! Mithridates' choice,
That called him to his daughter's nuptial bed,
Approved him lineal heir; consenting nobles,
The public will, the sanction of the laws,
All ratified his claim—yet, curst ambition,
Deaf to a nation's voice, a nation's charter,
Not satisfied to fill Iberia's throne,
Made war, unnatural war, against a son,
Usurped his throne, and, with remorseless rage,
Pursued his life!
Zel. Can Ariana plead
For such a son?—Means she to varnish o'er
The guilt of Rhadamistus?
Zen. Guilt, Zelmira!
Zel. Guilt that shoots horror through my aching heart!
Poor lost Zenobia!
Zen. And do her misfortunes
Awaken tender pity in your breast?
Zel. Ill-fated princess! in her vernal bloom
By a false husband murdered!—from the stem
A rose-bud torn, and in some desert cave
Thrown by, to moulder into silent dust!
Zen. You knew not Rhadamistus!——Pharasmanes
Knew not the early virtues of his son.
As yet an infant, in his tenderest years
His father sent him to Armenia's court,
That Mithridates' care might form his mind
To arts, to wisdom, and to manners, worthy
Armenia's sceptre, and Zenobia's love.
The world, delighted, saw each dawning virtue,
Each nameless grace, to full perfection rising!—
Oh! he was all the fondest maid could wish—
All truth, all honour, tenderness, and love!
Yet, from his empire thrown! with merciless fury
His father following—slaughter raging round,
What could the hero in that dire extreme!
Zel. Those strong impassioned looks!—some fatal secret
Works in her heart, and melts her into tears.
[*Aside.*
Zen. Driven to the margin of Araxes' flood—
No means of flight—aghast, he looked around—
Wild throbbed his bosom with conflicting passions——
'And must I then'—tears gushed and choaked his voice——
'And must I leave thee, then, Zenobia?—must
'Thy beauteous form'—he paused, then aimed a poniard
At his great heart—But, oh! I rushed upon him,
And with these arms, close-wreathing round his neck,
With all the vehemence of prayers and shrieks,
Implored the only boon he then could grant,
To perish with him in a fond embrace!
The foe drew near—time pressed—no way was left——
He clasped me to his heart—together both,
Locked in the folds of love, we plunged at once,

And sought a requiem in the roaring flood.
Zel.—This wondrous tale—this sudden burst of passion—
Zen. Ha! whither has my phrenzy led me!—hark!
That sound of triumph! lost, for ever lost!
Ruined Armenia——oh! devoted race!
[*A flourish of trumpets.*

Enter TIGRANES, *Soldiers, and some Prisoners.*

Zen. Thy looks, Tigranes, indicate thy purpose!
The armies met, and Pharasmanes conquered;
Is it not so?
Tig. As yet with pent-up fury
The soldier pants to let destruction loose.
With eager speed we urged our rapid march,
To where the Romans, tented in the vale,
With cold delay protract the lingering war.
At our approach their scanty numbers form
Their feeble lines, the future prey of vengeance.
Zen. And wherefore, when thy sword demands its share
Of havock in that scene of blood and horror,
Wherefore return'st thou to this lonely camp?
Tig. With cautious eye as I explored the forest,
Which rises thick near yonder ridge of mountains,
And stretches o'er the interminable plain,
I saw these captives in the gloomy wood,
Seeking, with silent march, the Roman camp.
Impaled alive, 'tis Pharasmanes' will
They suffer death in misery of torment.
Zen. Unhappy men! and must they——ha? that face,
That aged mien! that venerable form!
Immortal powers! is it my more than father!
—Is that Megistus?
Meg. Ariana here!
Gods! could I ever hope to see her more?
Thou virtuous maid! thou darling of my age!
Zen. It is—it is Megistus! once again,
Thus let me fall and clasp his reverend knee,
Print the warm kiss of gratitude and love
Upon this trembling hand, and pour the tears,
The mingled tears of wonder and of joy!
Meg. Rise, Ariana, rise—almighty gods!
The tide of joy and transport pours too fast
Along these withered veins—it is too much
For a poor weak old man, worn out with grief
And palsied age, it is too much to bear!
Oh! Ariana, daughter of affliction,
Have I then found thee? do I thus behold thee!
Now I can die content!
Zen. Thou best of men!
These joys our tears and looks can only speak.
Meg. Yet they are cruel joys—mysterious heaven!
You bid the storms o'ercast our darksome ways;
You gild the cloud with gleams of cheering light;
Then comes a breath from you, and all is vanished!
Zen. Wherefore dejected thus——
Meg. Alas! to meet thee
But for a moment, and then part for ever!
To meet thee here, only to grieve thee more,
To add to thy afflictions, wound that bosom
Where mild affection,——where each virtue dwells,
Just to behold thee, and then close my eyes
In endless night, while you survey my pangs
In the approaching agony of torment——
Zen. Talk not of agony; 'tis rapture all!
And who has power to tear thee from my heart?
Meg. Alas! the charge of vile imputed guilt—
Zen. I know thy truth, thy pure exalted mind——
Thy sense of noble deeds—imputed guilt!
Oh! none will dare—hast thou, Tigranes? what,
What is his crime? blush, foul traducer, blush!
Oh! [*To* MEG.] the wide world must own thy every virtue.
Tig. If in the conscious forest I beheld
Their dark complottings——
Zen. Peace, vile slanderer, peace!
Thou know'st who captivates a monarch's heart——
'Tis I protect him——Ariana does it!——
Thou, venerable man! in my pavilion
I'll lodge thee safe from danger——oh! this joy,
This best supreme delight the gods have sent,
In pity for whole years of countless woe!
[*Exit* ZEN. *with* MEG.
Tig. With what wild fury her conflicting passions
Rise to a storm, a tempest of the soul!
I know the latent cause—her heart revolts,
And leagues in secret with the Roman arms.
Zel. Beware, Tigranes! that excess of joy,
Those quick, those varied passions strongly speak
The stranger has an interest in her heart.
Besides, thou know'st o'er Pharasmanes' will
She holds supreme dominion——
Tig. True, she rules him
With boundless sway——
Zel. Nay, more to wake thy fears——
The youthful prince, the valiant Teribazus,
In secret sighs, and feels the ray of beauty
Through every sense soft-thrilling to his heart.
He too becomes thy foe.
Tig. Unguarded man!
Whate'er he loves or hates, with generous warmth,
As nature prompts, that dares he to avow,
And lets each passion stand confessed to view;
Such too is Ariana: bold and open,
She kindly gives instructions to her foe,
To mar her best designs.
Zel. Her foe, Tigranes!
That lovely form enshrines the gentlest virtues,
Softest compassion, unaffected wisdom,
To outward beauty lending higher charms,
Adorning and adorned! the generous prince,
He too—full well thou know'st him—he unites
In the heroic mould of manly firmness,
Each mild attractive art—oh! surely none
Envy the fair renown that's earn'd by virtue.
Tig. None should, Zelmira. Ha! those warlike notes!

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Each weary soldier rest upon his arms,
And wait the king's return—Zelmira, say,
In these dark moments of impending horror,
How fares thy beauteous friend? her tender spirit
But ill supports the fierce alarms of war.

Enter ZENOBIA.

Zen. Where is he? let me fly—oh! Pharasmanes———
Methought those sounds bespoke the king's approach——
Oh! Teribazus, tell me—have the fates—
This horrible suspense———
Ter. I came, bright maid,
To hush the wild emotions of thy heart.
Devouring slaughter for a while suspends
Its ruthless rage; as either host advanced
In dread array, and from the burnished arms
Of Asia's ranks redoubled sunbeams played,
Burning with bright diversities of day,
Came forth an herald from the Roman camp
With proffered terms—my father deign'd for once
To yield to mild persuasion—in his tent
The ambassador of Rome will soon attend him,
To sheathe the sword, and give the nation peace.
Zen. But oh! no peace for me, misfortune's heir!
The wretched heir of misery! But now
A more than father found, yet cruel men
Would tear him from me—generous, generous prince,
Spare an old man, whose head is white with age,
Nor let them wound me with the sharpest pang,
That ever tortur'd a poor bleeding heart!
Ter. Arise, my fair; let not a storm of grief
Thus bend to earth my Ariana's beauties;
Soon shall they all revive———
Zen. They brought him fettered,
Bound like a murderer! Tigranes, he,
This is the author of the horrid charge——
He threatens instant death—but oh! protect,
Protect an innocent, a good old man,
Or stretch me with him on the mournful bier!
Ter. By Heaven, whoe'er he is, since dear to you,
He shall not suffer—quick, direct me to him—
My guards shall safe inclose him.
Zen. In my pavilion
He waits his doom——
Ter. Myself will bear the tidings
Of life, of joy, and liberty restored.——
And thou, artificer of ill, thou false,
Thou vile defamer! leave thy treacherous arts,
Nor dare accuse whom Ariana loves. [*Exit* TER.
Zen. Zelmira, this is happiness supreme!
Oh! to have met with unexampled goodness,
To owe my all, my very life itself,
To an unknown but hospitable hand,
And thus enabled by the bounteous gods,
To pay the vast, vast debt——'tis ecstacy
That swells above all bounds, till the fond heart
Ache with delight, and thus run o'er in tears.
Zel. What must Zelmira think? at first, your tongue
Grew lavish in the praise of Rhadamistus,
With hints obscure touching your high descent;
And now, this hoary sage——is he your father?
My mind is lost in wonder and in doubt.
Zen. Then, to dispel thy doubts, and tell, at once,
What deep reserve has hid within my heart,
——I am Zenobia—I, that ill-starred wretch!
The daughter of a sceptered ancestry,
And now the slave of Mithridates' brother!
Zel. Long-lost Zenobia, and restored at length!
I am your subject; oh! my queen! my sovereign!
Zen. Thou generous friend! rise, my Zelmira, rise.
That good old man!—oh! it was he beheld me
Borne far away from Rhadamistus' arms,
Just perished, just lost!——
He dashed into the flood, redeemed me thence,
And brought me back to life. My opening eyes
Just saw the light, and closed again to shun it.
Each vital power was sunk; but he, well skill'd
In potent herbs, recalled my fluttering soul.
Zel. May the propitious gods reward his care!
Zen. With me he saved a dear, a precious boy,
Then in the womb concealed; he saved my child
To trace his father's loved resemblance to me,
The dear, dear offspring of our bridal loves.
Zel. Oh, blessings on him, blessings on his head!
Zen. Resigned and patient I since dwelt with him,
Far in the mazes of a winding wood,
Midst hoary mountains and deep caverned rocks.
But oh! the fond idea of my lord
Pursued me still, or in the caverned rock,
The mountain's brow, or pendent forest's gloom.
The sun looked joyless down; each lonely night
Heard my griefs echoing through the woodland shade.
My infant Rhadamistus! he is lost;
He, too, is wrested from me!—Midst the rage,
And the wide waste of war, the hell-hound troops
Of Pharismanes sought my lone retreat,
And, from the violated shades, from all
My soul held dear, the barbarous ruffians tore me,
And never shall the wreched mother see
Her child again!
Zel. Heaven may restore him still——
May still restore your royal husband too.
Who knows but some protecting god——
Zen. No god,
No guardian power was present!—he is lost!—
Oh! Rhadamistus! oh, my honoured lord!
No pitying eye beheld thy decent form——
The rolling flood devoured thee, thou hast found
A wat'ry grave, and the last dismal accents,
That trembled on thy tongue, came bubbling up
And murmured, lost Zenobia!

Zel. Yet be calm;
The gods may bring redress—even now they give,
To misery like thine the heartfelt joy
Of shielding injured virtue.
Zen. Yes, Zelmira,
That pure delight is mine, a ray from heaven
That bids affliction smile—All-gracious powers!
Make me your agent here to save Megistus;
I'll bear the load of life, bear all its ills,
Till you shall bid this sad world-weary spirit
To peaceful regions wing her happy flight,
And seek my lord in the dark realms of night;
Seek his dear shade in every pensive grove,
And bear him all my constancy and love.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter TIGRANES.

Tig. A false accuser deemed!—artificer of fraud!
Those words, intemperate boy—thy frenzy, too,
Deluded fair! shall cost you dear atonement.
Yet till occasion rise—the king approaches.
[*Grand warlike music.*

A Military Procession. Enter PHARASMANES, *&c.*

Phar. At length the fame of Pharasmanes' arms
Hath awed the nations round. Rome shrinks aghast
With pale dismay, recalls her trembling legions,
And deprecates the war. Oh! what a scene
Of glorious havoc had yon field beheld,
If peaceful counsels had not checked my fury!
Valiant Tigranes, those rebellious slaves,
Thy care detected, have they suffered death?
Tig. Your pardon, sir—their doom, as yet, suspended——
The generous prince—I would not utter aught
Should injure Teribazus——
Phar. Ha! proceed,
And give me all the truth.
Tig. By his command—
His tender nature deemed it barbarous rigour
To urge their sentence—
Phar. Vain aspiring boy!
Tell Teribazus—

Enter ZENOBIA.

Tell the unthinking prince,
The rash presumptuous stripling, these his arts,
These practices of popular demeanour,
Are treason to his father. Let him know,
Through wide Armenia and Iberia's realm
My will is fate—the slaves shall meet their doom.
Zen. Oh! mighty king, thus bending lowly down,
An humble suppliant——
Phar. Ariana here!
Thou beauteous mourner, let no care molest
Thy tender bosom; rise, and bid thy charms
Beam forth thy gentlest lustre, to adorn
The glories of my triumph.
Zen. Oh! a wretch like me
It best befits, thus grovelling on the earth,
To bathe your feet with tears.
Phar. It must not be—— [*He raises her.*
By Heaven, renown in arms in vain attends me,
If the loved graces of thy matchless form
Are thus depressed and languish in affliction,
Like flowers that droop and hang their pining heads
Beneath the rigour of relentless skies.
Zen. If thou wouldst raise me from the depths of woe,
Forgive those captives, whom thy fatal anger
Adjudged to death, nor let ill-timed resentment
Fall on the prince your son—'twas I—my tears—
My piercing lamentations won his heart
To arrest their doom——
Phar. For traitors to my crown
Does Ariana plead?
Zen. For mild humanity
My suppliant voice is raised—I point the means
To add new glory to your fame in arms.
In nought so near can men approach the Gods,
As the dear act of giving life to others.
In feats of war the glory is divided,
To all imparted, to each common man,
And fortune too shall vindicate her share.
But, of sweet mercy, the vast, vast renown
Is all your own; nor officer, nor soldier
Can claim a part—the praise, the honoured praise
Adorns the victor; nor is the echo lost
'Midst shouts of armies, and the trumpet's sound.
He conquers even victory itself,
Than hero more—a blessing to the world!
Phar. Thy eloquence disarms my stubborn soul.
But wherefore urgent thus? Amidst the band,
Is there who claims thy soft solicitude?
Zen. A hoary sage—alas! a more than father——
The best of men—preserver of my being——
A blameless shepherd! void of fraud and guilt,
Innoxious through his life—Oh! mighty king,
Spare an old man, a venerable sire!
Nought has your fortune greater than the power
To serve humanity!—shew that your heart
Has the sweet grace, the generous virtue too!
Phar. My soul relents, and yields to thy entreaty,
Thy violence of prayer—release him straight—
My brightest honours wait him; honours fit

For him who gave thee birth; for him whose virtue
Thy generous soul deems worthy its esteem.
Zen. Our humble station seeks nor pomp nor splendour;
We only ask, unenvied and obscure,
To live in blameless innocence; to seek
Our calm retreat, embraced in depth of woods,
And dwell with peace and humble virtue there.
Phar. That cold disdain, which shuns admiring eyes,
Attracts the more, exalting every charm.
No more of humble birth; thy matchless beauty,
Like gems, that in the mine conceal their lustre,
Was formed to dignify the eastern throne.
My sceptre, that strikes terror to each heart,
Graced by thy decent hand, shall make each subject
Adore thy softer sway. The glorious æra
Of Pharasmanes' love, his date of empire
With Ariana shared, henceforth begins,
And leads the laughing hours; but, first, the storm
Of war and wild commotion must be hushed—
That mighty care now calls me to my throne,
To give the Roman audience; audience fit
To strike a citizen of Rome with awe,
When he beholds the majesty of kings. [*Going.*

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Dread sir, the Roman embassy approaches.
From yonder rampart, that invests your camp,
I heard their horses' hoofs, with eager speed,
Beat the resounding soil.
Phar. Let them approach——
And thou, whose arrogance—but I forbear——
When Ariana pardons, my resentment
Yields to her smiles, and looks away its rage.
As when the crimes of men Jove's wrath demand,
And the red thunder quivers in his hand;
The queen of love his vengeance can disarm
With the soft eloquence of every charm;
Controul his passions with resistless sway,
And the impending storm smile to serenest day.
[*Exit with his train.*
Ter. And may I, then, once more, thou bright perfection,
May Teribazus once again approach thee,
While thus my father, my ambitious father,
At sight of thee forgets his cruel nature,
And wonders how he feels thy beauty's power?
Oh! may I—but I am too importunate——
Your looks rebuke me from you, and I see
How hateful I am grown!
Zen. Mistake me not,
Nor rashly thus arraign the looks of one,
Whose heart lies bleeding here——thy generous worth
Is oft the live-long day my favourite theme.
But oh! for me, for wretched Ariana,
The god of love long since hath quenched his torch,
And every source of joy lies dead within me.
Ter. That cold averted look! but I am used
To bear your scorn; your scorn that wounds the deeper,
Masked as it is with pity and esteem.
Yet love incurable, relentless love,
Burns here a constant flame, that rises still,
And will to madness kindle, should I see
That hoard of sweets, that treasury of charms,
Yield to another, to a barbarous rival,
Who persecutes a son to his undoing.
Zen. If Ariana's happiness would wound thee,
Thou wilt ne'er have cause to murmur or repine.
Nought can divorce me from the black despair
To which I have long been wedded.
Ter. Calm disdain,
I grant you, well becomes the tyrant fair
Whom Pharasmanes destines for his throne.
But oh! in pity to this breaking heart,
Give me, in mercy, give some other rival,
Whom I may stab—without remorse may stab,
'Midst his delight, in all his heaven of bliss,
And spurn him from the joys, that, scorpion-like,
Shoot anguish here—here, through my very soul.
Zen. Alas! too generous prince, the gods long since,
Between us both, fixed their eternal bar.
Ter. What say'st thou, Ariana? ha! beware,
Nor urge me to distraction—love like mine,
Fierce, generous, wild——with disappointment wild,
May rouse my desperate rage to do a deed
Will make all nature shudder. Love despised,
Not always can respect the ties of nature!
Driven to extremes, the tenderest passion scorn'd,
May hate at length the object it adores,
And stung to madness—no! inhuman fair,
You still must be—in all vicissitudes,
In all the scenes misfortune has in store,
You still must be the sovereign of my soul.
But for the favoured, for the happy rival,
By Heaven, whoe'er he be, despair and phrenzy
May strike the blow, and dash him from your arms,
A sacrifice to violated love.
Zen. Why thus distract yourself with vain suspicions?
You have no rival, whom your rage can murder——
None in the power of fate—Oh! Teribazus,
The wretched Ariana—long, long since——
My heart swells o'er—I cannot speak—a duty,
A rigorous duty bids me ne'er accept
Thy proffered love; a duty, which, if known,
Would in eternal silence seal thy vows,
Turn all thy rage to tears, and, Oh! my prince!
Bid thee respect calamities like mine.
[*Exit* ZEN.
Ter. Yet, Ariana, stay—turn, turn and hear me—
She's gone, the cruel, unrelenting fair!
And leaves me thus to misery of soul.

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zop. Flamminius from the Romans is arrived,

And bears the olive branch; the king, your father,
Assembles all his nobles——
Ter. Say, Zopiron,
Does Rome yield up Armenia?
Zop. Rome is still
The scourge of lawless power—a people's rights
The conscript fathers have resolved to shield,
And to the lineal heir assert the crown.
Ter. May the stern god of battles aid their arms,
And fight with the deliverers of mankind!
Unnatural father! that would seize my sceptre,
Mine, as my brother's heir, and ravish, with it,
The idol of my soul—but now, no more
His tyranny prevails—to empire raised,
'Twill be the pride of my exulting heart
To lay my crown at Ariana's feet. [*Exit* TER.
Zop. Unhappy prince! should Pharasmanes know
His ardent passion for the captive maid,
Alas! his fatal rage—propitious powers!
May these events—may Rome's ambassador—
Oh! may he come with concord in his train,
And far avert the ills my heart forebodes!
But lo! Flamminius.——

Enter RHADAMISTUS.

Welcome to these tents,
The harbinger of peace!
Rhad. Does your king know
Flamminius waits his leisure?
Zop. He prepares
To hear you, Roman!
Rhad. As I tread his camp,
There is, I know not what, of horror shoots
Through all my frame, and disconcerted reason
Suspends her function—a black train of crimes,
Murders, and lust, and rapine, cities sacked,
Nations laid waste by the destructive sword,
A thousand ruthless deeds all rise to view,
And shake my inmost soul, as I approach
The author of calamity and ruin.
Zop. Then, from a Roman, from a son of freedom,
Let the fell tyrant hear the voice of truth,
The strong resistless strain, which liberty
Breathes in her capitol, till his proud heart
Shudder with inward horror at itself.
Rhad. In Pharasmanes' camp that honest style!
Thy visage bears the characters of virtue.
Wilt thou impart thy name and quality?
Zop. In me you see Zopiron! deem me not
A vile abettor of the tyrant's guilt.
To me Armenia trusts her sacred rights;
Hither her chosen delegate she sends me,
At the tribunal of Iberia's king,
To plead her cause; an injured people's cause!
Oh! never, never shall my native land
Yield to a vile usurper,
Rhad. Rome has heard
Thy patriot toil for freedom—Rhadamistus
Has heard thy generous ardour in his cause,
And pants to recompence thy truth and zeal.
Zop. Oh! name not Rhadamistus——now no more
The god-like youth shall bless Armenia's realm.
The fates just shewed him to the wondering world,
And then, untimely, snatched him from our sight!
Rhad. And did'st thou know the prince?
Zop. My lot severe
Denied that transport; but the voice of fame
Endears his memory.
Rhad. A time may come
When you may meet, and both in friendship burn.
Still Rhadamistus lives!
Zop. Said'st thou, Flamminius!
Lives he?
Rhad. Still he survives; from death and peril
Saved by a miracle! and now for him
Rome claims Armenia.
Zop. Claims Armenia for him!
For Rhadamistus claims! and will ye, gods!
Still will ye give him to a nation's prayers?
Rhad. Alas! he lives; heart-broken, desolate,
In sorrow plunged; abandoned to despair!
Zop. The righteous gods will vindicate his cause.
His loved Zenobia, Mithridates' daughter,
That every excellence—does she, too, live?
Have the indulgent powers watched o'er her fate,
And saved her for her people?
Rhad. There, Zopiron,
There lies the wound that pierces to his soul,
The sharpest pang—that rends—that cleaves his heart.
Oh! never more shall lovely lost Zenobia,
That angel form, that pattern of all goodness,
No, never more—she's gone, for ever gone!
Thou would'st not think—her barbarous, cruel husband—
With his own hand—the recollected tale
Of horror shakes my frame to dissolution!
Her husband!—he!—that dear, that tender form——
Oh!—poor Zenobia—oh!— [*Falls into a swoon.*
Zop. He faints! he falls!
Can Roman stoicism thus dissolve
In tender pity? Rise, Flamminius, rise!
He stirs; he breathes; and life begins to wander
O'er his forsaken cheek. Resume thy strength,
And, like a Roman, triumph o'er your tears.
Rhad. I will not be forced back to a wretched world.
No; let me—let me die.—
Zop. His eyes reject
The cheerful light—what can this anguish mean?
Rhad. You do but waste your pains; it is in vain;
Away! and leave a murderer to his woes.
Zop. Why thus accuse thyself? I'll not believe it—
Thus let me raise thee from the earth—
Rhad. Alas!—[*Rising.*]—
Despair weighs heavy on me.
Zop. Still I must
Controul this sudden phrenzy——
Rhad. Oh! Zopiron,

Here, here it lies——
Zop. Unburden all, and ease
Your loaded heart—it cannot be—thou never wert
A murderer!
Rhad. Yes! the horror of the world!
A murderous wretch! the fatal Rhadamistus!
'Twas I—these felon hands! with treacherous love
I clasped her in this cursed embrace—I bore her
In these detested arms, and gave that beauty,
That tender form, to the devouring waves.
Plunge me, ye furies, in your lakes of fire!
Here fix, fix all your vultures in my heart!
And lo! they rush upon me. [*Starts up.*] See! see there!
With racks and wheels they come; they tear me piece-meal—
'Tis just, Zenobia! I deserve it all——
[*Falls upon* ZOPIRON.
Zop. Assist him, guardian powers! your own high will
Guides these events—revive, my prince, revive!
Rhad. Why thus recal me to despair and horror?
To bid me hate the light, detest myself,
Traitor to nature, traitor to my love!
And yet, Zopiron, yet I am not plunged
So far in guilt, but thou may'st pity me!
Heaven, I attest, yes, you can witness, gods!
I meant to perish with her—but the fates
Denied that comfort—from her circling arms
The torrent bore me far—expiring, senseless,
Gasping in death, the overflowing tide
Impetuous drove me on the unwished-for shore.
There, soon deserted by the merciless stream,
A band of Romans, as from Syria's frontier
They ranged the country round, descried me, stretched
Pale and inanimate; with barbarous pity,
They lent their aid, and chained me to the rack
Of inauspicious life!
Zop. For wond'rous ends
Mysterious Providence has still reserved you,
To circulate the happiness of millions,
A patriot prince——
Rhad. Would they had let me perish!
What has a wretch, like me, to do in life,
When my Zenobia's lost? 'tis true, my friend,
She begged to die—but that pathetic look,
Her tears, embraces, and those streaming eyes,
Still beauteous in distress! each winning grace,
Her every charm, should have forbid the deed,
And pleaded for her life!
Zop. And yet, my prince,
When self-acquitting conscience——
Rhad. Self-condemned,
My soul is racked, is tortured—not her child,
Her unborn infant, the first fruit of love,
Not even her babe could, with the voice of nature,
Plead for itself, or for its wretched mother.
They perished both; she and her little one,
And I survive to tell it.
Zop. Let not grief
O'erwhelm your reason thus—What! when your father,
Your cruel father, reeking from the blood
Of Mithridates—
Rhad. Naught but death was left;
Yet even that last, sad refuge was debarred me!
E'er since, I've lived in misery; my days
Were coloured all with anguish and despair!
Long from the Romans I concealed my name,
At length revealed me to a chosen friend;
Journeyed with him to Rome; and, in full senate,
Told all the dismal story of my woes.
The conscript fathers heard, and dropt a tear—
Then, to quick vengeance fired, dispatched their legions
To wage the war; Paulinus leads them on,
And now to me commits this embassy,
With fully delegated powers from Rome.
Zop. With one united voice Armenia calls
For Mithridates' heir; convinced by rumour
That thou art lost, the general cry demands
Your brother Teribazus——
Rhad. He, Zopiron,
Is to these eyes a stranger.
Zop. Hapess prince!
A cloud of woes lies brooding o'er his head.
A fair, a lovely captive rules his heart;
Her name is Ariana; and, indeed,
No wonder she attracts his soft regard,
And kindles all the vehemence of love.
The tyrant eyes her, too, with fierce desire,
And ruin nods o'er Teribazus' head.
Rhad. By Heaven it shall not be! Alas! I know
The pang of losing whom the heart adores.
I'll yield him up Armenia—what are crowns
But toys of vain ambition, when the loved,
The dear partaker of my throne is lost?

Enter TIGRANES.

Zop. What would Tigranes?
Tig. Pharasmanes calls
Flamminius to his presence——
Rhad. I attend him;
So tell your king——
Tig. Instant he waits thee, Roman. [*Exit* TIG.
Rhad. How my heart trembles at the awful meeting!
Zop. Then summon all your strength—the lapse of time
From early youth, when Pharasmanes saw you,
Affliction's inward stroke, that Roman garb,
All will protect, and cloak you from detection.
Rhad. Zopiron, yes; in this important crisis,
When violated laws, and injured men,
When my own wrongs are labouring in my heart,
The great occasion calls for firmest vigour.
Yes, in this interview I will maintain
A Roman's part: in Pharasmanes' soul
I'll wake the furies of detested guilt,
And pour the rapid energy of truth,
Till even to himself his crimes are known,
And the usurper tremble on his throne.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—PHARASMANES *on his throne;* TIGRANES, ZOPIRON, *Officers, &c.*

Phar. Where is this bold republican from Rome?
This enemy of kings? Tigranes, thou
Bid the plebeian enter——Pharasmanes
Vouchsafes him audience.

Enter FLAMMINIUS.

Phar. Now, Flamminius, say,
What motive brings you to Araxes' banks,
To wage this slow, this philosophic war?
Rhad. By me, unworthy of the important charge,
By me, unequal to the arduous theme,
The conscript fathers here explain their conduct,
And justify the ways of Rome to kings.
Phar. Roman, thou may'st declaim with all thy pomp
Of idle eloquence.
Rhad. No power of words,
No graceful periods of harmonious speech
Dwell on my lip—the only art I boast
Is honest truth, unpolished, unadorned:
Truth, that informs you, to usurp a crown,
For dire ambition to unpeople realms,
Are violations of each sacred law,
And bid the Roman eagle, winged with vengeance,
To the Araxes' margin bend her flight,
To tell destruction it shall rage no more.
Phar. And dares Paulinus' soldier, dar'st thou, slave,
Thus offer vile indignity, and mouth
The language of your forum to a king?
Rhad. Rome knows, and owns you as Iberia's king,
But not Armenia's.
Phar. Ha!
Rhad. The assembled senate
Acknowledges your vast renown in arms,
And honours the unshaken fortitude
Even of a foe—but, sir, the fortitude,
Whose brutal rage lays nations desolate,
It is the glory of imperial Rome
To humble and subdue—it is the glory
Of Rome, that spares the vanquished, 'tis her pride
To set the nations free; to fix the bounds
Of the fell tyrant's power; to trace the circle
From which he must not move. These are the arts,
The bright prerogative of Rome—of Rome,
The mistress of the world, whose conquering banners
O'er Asia's realms so oft have waved in triumph,
And made even kings her subjects——
Phar. Ha! vain boaster!
Rhad. Made oriental kings, short by the knee
Accept their crown, with tears of joy accept it,
And be the viceroys of a Roman senate.
Phar. And this to Pharasmanes? has not yet
A train of conquests taught you to revere
This good right arm in war? This arm the Parthians
Have felt with fatal overthrow—no spoil,
No trophies won from me have graced their triumphs;
No friends of mine were harnessed to their chariots;
No captive chief, like your own mangled Crassus,
There roams a sullen ghost, and calls for vengeance,
For vengeance still unpaid, and calls in vain
For the sad funeral rites. Would Rome presume
To wrest Armenia from me—lo! my banners,
From frosty Caucasus to Phasis' banks,
Wave high in air, and shadow all the land.
Call your embattled legions—or does Rome,
All-conquering Rome, that mistress of the world,
Does she at length, by her ambassadors,
Negotiate thus the war?
Rhad. Rome, sir, commands
The subject world, for she adores the gods,
And their all-powerful aid.
Phar. Would'st thou dispute
My lawful claim—arm thee with sword and fire,
Not with vain subtleties and idle maxims.
Armenia's crown is mine—derived to me,
Heir to a brother, and a son deceased.
Rhad. And can a murderer, can the midnight ruffian
Prove himself heir—by the assassin's stab?
Phar. Thou base reviler!
[*Comes forward, and draws his sabre.*
Tig. Moderate your fury. [*Holding him.*]
It were unjust—
Zop. The character he bears——
The laws of nations——
Phar. Thou base insolent!
Who dar'st to wound the ear of sacred kings
With a black crime, that's horrible to nature!
Rhad. Yes, horrible to nature!—yet the world
Has heard it all—thou art the man of blood!
A brother's blood yet smokes upon thy hand—
Not his white age, his venerable looks,
Not even his godlike virtues could withhold thee!
Gashed o'er with wounds, he falls—he bleeds, he dies,
Without a groan he dies!—that is thy work;
Thine, murderer! thine!
Phar. No more—the hand of heaven
Shook from the blasted tree the withered fruit.
Rhad. Forbear the impious strain—it is the style
Ambition speaks, when for a crown it stabs,
Then dares, with execrable mockery, dares
Traduce the governing, all-righteous mind.

Phar. He harrows up my soul!—and dost thou think
A madman's ravings——
Rhad. Since that hour accursed,
Hast thou not plunged thee deeper still in guilt?
Your son—your blameless son——
Phar. His crimes provoked
A father's wrath—his and Zenobia's crimes!
Rhad. She too—untimely lost—unbidden tears,
Forbear to stream, nor quite unman me thus!
Phar. In tears!—by Heaven, thou woman-hearted slave,
Those coward symptoms have some latent spring
That lies concealed within that treacherous heart.
Rhad. They are the tears humanity lets fall,
When soft-eyed beauty dies, untimely slain.
But to avenge her death, arrayed in terror,
The Roman legions——
Phar. Lead them to the charge.
Thou, quit my camp: If, when yon sun descends
Thou linger'st here, the title of ambassador
Shall nought avail to save thee from my fury.
Rhad. E'er that, resign Armenia. Till the close
Of day, I give thee leisure to revolve
The vengeance Rome prepares—Thou know'st
With what a ponderous arm her hardy sons
Lift the avenging spear. Be timely wise,
Nor dare provoke your fate. [*Exit* RHAD.
Phar. Roman, farewell!
Do thou, Tigranes, issue forth my orders
From tent to tent, that each man stand prepared
For the dead midnight hour—with silent march
Then will I pour, with ruinous assault,
Upon the astonished foe; my horses' hoofs
Imbrue in blood, and give to-morrow's sun
A spectacle of horror and destruction.
[*He ascends his throne, and the back scene closes.*

SCENE II.

Enter ZENOBIA *and* MEGISTUS.

Zen. Oh! tell me all, Megistus; let me hear
All that concerns my child, my blooming boy,
My little Rhadamistus—is he safe?
Give me the truth—do not deceive a mother,
Who doats upon her babe—is my child safe?
Meg. Dry up your tears—I cannot bear to see you
Afflicted thus—your infant hero's safe—
You may believe your faithful, old Megistus——
Zen. I do believe thee; but excuse my weakness.
My fluttering fears for ever paint him to me
By ruffians seized, and, as he sees the knife
Aimed at his little throat, in vain imploring
For me, by name, and begging my assistance,
While far, far off, his miserable mother
No aid can give, nor snatch him to her heart.
Meg. I never yet deceived you——by yon heaven
The prince still lives—when I regained my cottage,
After the toils of many a weary day,
I found him there—but grieved, and wondering much
Where his dear mother was.
Zen. Megistus, tell me,
Oh! tell me each particular; his looks,
All his apt questions, his enchanting words;
For I could hear of him for ever—lovely youth!
His father's image blooming in his boy!
Through seven revolving years my only comfort!
When from my eyes the sudden sorrows gushed,
How would he look, and ask his wretched mother
What meant those falling tears?——alas! even now
I see him here before me—did my child
Think his poor mother lost?
Meg. At first he seemed
To pine in thought at your long, weary absence,
And many a look he cast, that plainly spoke
His little bosom heaved with various passions.
Still would he seek you in each well-known haunt,
Each bower, each cavern, like the tender fawn,
That through the woodland seeks its mother lost,
Exploring all around with anxious eye,
And looking still unutterable grief,
Lonely and sad, and stung with keen regret.
Zen. Did my child weep?——not much, I hope——
Meg. With soothing tales
I laboured to beguile him from his sorrow:
I promised your return; a gentle smile
Brightened his anxious look; he sighed content,
And then I led him to a safer dwelling,
Among the shepherds of the Syrian vale,
Who all have sworn to guard him as their own,
And in due season lead him to the Romans.
Zen. Oh, may those shepherds know the kindest influence
Of the indulgent heavens! Yet, why not stay
To guard him? but I'll not complain; on me
Your cares were fixed. Oh! tell me how the gods
Watched over all thy ways, and brought thee to me!
Where hast thou lived these many, many days?
Meg. In bitterness of soul I've lived, thy fate,
Thy tender form deep imaged in my breast!
I ranged the banks where the Araxes flows,
But bring, alas! no tidings of your lord.
Heart-broken, wearied out, I measured back
My feeble steps, but thou wert ravished thence!
For thee, I traversed hills and forests drear;
Thee I invoked, that every caverned rock,
Each vale, each mountain echoed with thy name.
Zen. And here at length you find me; here, encompassed
With all the worst of ills; hence let us fly
To the blessed Syrian valley, where my child
Wins with his early manhood every heart,
And calls for me, and chides this long delay.
Meg. Vain the attempt; one only way is left:
Reveal thee to the ambassador of Rome.
Safe in his train, thou may'st escape this place,
And gain Paulinus' camp; Zenobia, known,
Will meet protection there.

Zen. The gods inspire
The happy counsel. Ha! Tigranes comes!
Retire, Megistus. [*He goes out.*] A gay dawn of hope
Beams forth at length, and lights up day within me.
Tig. Hail princess, destined to imperial sway,
To grace with beauty Pharasmanes' throne!
By me, the impatient king requests you'll fix
The happy nuptial hour.
Zen. Thou might'st as well
Command me wed the forked lightning's blaze,
That gilds the storm, and be in love with horror.
Tig. Take heed, rash fair! an eastern monarch's love,
Ardent as his, must not be made the sport
Of tyrant beauty. When a rival dares
Oppose his sovereign's wish——
Zen. Does Pharasmanes,
Say, does your king permit his spies of state,
That curse of human kind, to breathe their whispers
In his deluded ear?
Tig. Full well 'tis known
That Teribazus bids you thus revolt,
And draws your heart's allegiance from your king.
Zen. Thou vile accuser!—if the prince's virtues
Have touched my bosom, what hast thou to urge?
What if a former Hymeneal vow
Has bound my soul?—what if a father, sir,
A father, dear as my heart's purple drops,
Enjoin a rigid duty ne'er to share
The throne of Mithridates with a murderer?
Tig. Madam, those words——
Zen. Thou instrument of ill!
Who still art ready with a tale suborned,
And if thou art not perjured, dar'st betray;—
Away, and let thy conscience tell the rest. [*Exit.*
Tig. Vain haughty fair!—thou hast provoked my rage
By wrongs unnumbered; but for all those wrongs,
Soon shall inevitable ruin seize thee.

Enter RHADAMISTUS.

Rhad. Perhaps, ere this, your king's tumultuous passions
Sink to a calm, and reason takes her turn.
Then seek him, sir, and bear a Roman's message,
The terms of peace humanity suggests.
Tell him, Flamminius wishes to prevent
The rage of slaughter, and the streams of blood,
Which else shall deluge yonder crimson plains.
Tig. Already, Roman, his resolve is fixed.
War, horrid war impends.
Rhad. And yet, in pity
To human kind, to the unhappy millions
Who soon shall die, and with their scattered bones
Whiten the plains of Asia, it were best
To sheathe the sword, and join in Rome's alliance.
Wilt thou convey my message?
Tig. I obey. [*Exit.*
Rhad. May some propitious power inspire his heart,
And touch the springs of human kindness in him.
Else, against whom, amidst the charging hosts,
Must Rhadamistus' sword be levelled?—ha!—
Spite of his crimes, he is my father still:
And must this arm, against the source of life,
Nay, more, perhaps against a brother too—
A brother still unknown!—he, too, may die
By this unconscious hand!—this hand, already
Inured to murder whom my heart adores!
My brother, then, may bleed! and when in death,
Gasping he lies, and pours his vital stream,
Then, in that moment, shall the generous youth
Extend his arms, and, with a piteous look,
Tell me, a brother doth forgive his murderer!
Gods! you have doomed me to the blackest woe,
To be a wretch abhorred, author of crimes
From which my tortured breast revolts with horror!—
Who's there?—A youth comes forward.—Now be firm,
Be firm, my heart, and guard thy fatal secret!

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Illustrious Roman, if misfortune's son,
A wretched, ruined, miserable prince,
May claim attention—
Rhad. Ha, can this be he!
The graces of his youth, each feeling here,
Here, at my heartstrings, tell me 'tis my brother.
[*Aside.*
Ter. I see you are moved, and I intrude too far.
Rhad. Pursue your purpose; warmest friendship for you
Glows in this breast.
Ter. Though Pharasmanes' fury
Maintains a fixed hostility with Rome,
Blend not the son with all a father's crimes.
Rhad. Go on; I pant to hear.
Ter. My father's cruelty
Each day breaks out in some new act of horror,
Nor lets the sword grow cool from human blood.
First, in his brother's breast he plunged it; then,
Inflamed to fiercer rage, 'gainst his own son.
Oh, Rhadamistus! thou much injured prince!
Rhad. And didst thou love that brother?
Ter. Generous Roman,
He lived far hence remote; I ne'er beheld him,
But the wide world resounded with his fame.
Rhad. Hold, hold my tears!—Oh! they will burst their way
At this his virtuous tenderness and love! [*Aside.*
Ter. And dost thou weep too, Roman?
Rhad. From such horror,
And so much cruelty, my nature shrinks.
Whatever purpose rolls within thy breast,
Boldly confide it. Shall I, armed with vengeance,
Assault the purple tyrant in his camp?
Or wilt thou join my steps? then, in the front
Of a brave veteran legion, head the war,
Seek the usurper 'midst his plumed troops,
And thus avenge mankind?
Ter. No; far from me,
Far be the guilt of meditating aught
Against the life from whence my being sprung.

Let him oppress me,—he's a parent still!
Rhad. He rives my heart! Oh! what a lot is mine! [*Aside.*
Ter. Not for myself I fear; but oh! Flamminius,
A lovely captive,—'tis for her I tremble;
For Ariana, for that sweet perfection;
She is her sex's boast!—her gentle bosom
Fraught with each excellence!—her form and feature
Touched by the hand of elegance; adorned
By every grace, and cast in beauty's mould!
Her, Pharasmanes means to ravish from me.
But thou convey her hence—'tis all I ask.
Rhad. By Heaven I will!—do thou, too, join our flight:
Armenia shall be thine, and that sweet maid
Reward thy goodness with connubial love,
Adorn thy throne, and make a nation blessed!
Ter. Make Ariana happy! bear her hence,
And save those bright unviolated charms
From Pharasmanes' power! When wished-for peace
Settles a jarring world, Flamminius, then,
Then will I seek thee. Wilt thou then resign her?
Rhad. Yes, then; as pure as the unsullied snow,
That never felt a sunbeam; then I'll give her
Back to thy faithful love.
Ter. Thou generous Roman!
In gratitude I bow—she's here at hand;
A moment brings her to you, while at distance
I watch each avenue, each winding path,
That none intrude upon your privacy. [*Exit.*
Rhad. At length I've seen my brother; know how much
He differs from his father: he shall seek
The Roman tents; I'll there disclose myself;
There will embrace him with a brother's love.
Oh! how the tender transport heaves and swells,
Till, thus, the fond excess dissolves in tears!

Enter MEGISTUS, *leading* ZENOBIA.

Zen. Alas! my heart forebodes I know not what.
Meg. Dispel each doubt—this is your only refuge.
Zen. Thou generous Roman—if distress like mine—
If an unhappy captive may approach thee——
Rhad. To me affliction's voice—ye powers of Heaven!
That air! those features! that remembered glance!
Zen. If thus a wretch's presence can alarm you——
Rhad. The music of that voice! such once she looked!
And if I had not plunged her in the stream,
I could persuade myself——
Zen. Those well-known accents!
Those tender soft regards!—nay, mock me not!—
I could not hope to see thee! tell me, art thou
That once adored!—oh!
[*Faints into* MEGISTUS' *arms.*
Meg. Ah! her strength forsakes her—
Support her, Heaven!—[*Catches her in his arms.*
Rhad. Ye wonder-working gods!
Is this illusion all? or does your goodness
Indeed restore her!—if I do not dream,
If this be true,—oh! let those angel eyes
Open to life, to love, and Rhadamistus.
Meg. What further miracles doth Heaven prepare?
Zen. Forgive my weakness—the air-painted image
Of my loved lord—and see!—again 'tis present!—
That look, that speaks the fond impassioned soul!
Yes, such he was!—oh! art thou—tell me—say—
Art thou restored me?—art thou Rhadamistus?
Rhad. I have not murdered her!—benignant gods!
I am not guilty—my Zenobia lives!
Zen. It is my lord! Oh! I can hold no longer,
But, thus delighted, spring to his embrace,
Thus wander o'er him with my tears and kisses,
And thus, and thus,—speak my enraptured soul.
Rhad. She lives! she lives! what kind protecting god,
Long lost, and long lamented, gives thee back,
Gives me to view thee, and to hear thy voice,
With joy to ecstacy, with tears to rapture?
Zen. This good old man—'twas he preserved me for you.
Meg. Oh! day of charms! Oh! unexpected hour!
I have not lived in vain—these gushing eyes
Have seen their mutual transports!
Rhad. Generous friend!
Come to my heart—Zenobia's second father!
Zen. Thou art indebted more than thou can'st pay him;
Indebted for our infant babe preserved,
The blossom of our joys! thou can'st not think
How much he looks, and moves, and talks like thee.
Rhad. Oh! mighty gods! it is too much of bliss,
Too exquisite to bear! these barbarous hands
Had well nigh murdered both my wife and child
Wilt thou forgive me? Oh! my best delight,
Wilt thou receive a traitor to your arms?
Wilt thou, Zenobia?
Zen. Will I? gracious Heaven!
Thou source of all my comfort!
Meg. Ha! beware,
Beware, my prince! but now with hasty step
I saw Tigranes circling yonder tent.
Rhad. The ambassador of Rome he seeks, on business
Of import high—I will prevent his speed—
And must I, then, so soon depart, Zenobia?
Zen. Hence, quickly hence! anon we'll meet again—
Rhad. Yes, we will meet; the gods have given thee to me,
And they will finish their own holy work. [*Exit.*
Meg. My prayers are heard at length—Zenobia still

Shall be Armenia's queen.
Zen. Oh! good Megistus,
Heaven has been bounteous, and restored my lord.
With him I'll fly, wrapt in the gloom of night;
And thou, Megistus, thou shalt join our flight;
Placed near his throne, thy generous zeal shall share
The bright reward of all thy toil and care;
While I, redeemed at length from fierce alarms,
Forget my woes in Rhadamistus' arms. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter RHADAMISTUS *and* TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Thou art a friend indeed, thou generous man!
The best of friends, to save such innocence,
That lovely virgin bloom! the pious act
Shall to remotest time transmit thy name,
Ennobled by humanity and virtue.
Rhad. Alas! no praise I merit; 'tis a deed
That loses virtue's name—
Ter. Flamminius, no!
Thou shalt not derogate from worth like thine.
But oh! beware, my friend, and steel thy heart
Against the sweet illapse of gentler passions.
To love her were such treachery! By Heaven!
It were a fraud of a more damned hue—
A fraud to sacred friendship! but my soul
Rejects the mean suspicion—thou art just,
And Ariana shall be mine again!
Rhad. If, when the tumult of the war is passed,
You then persist to claim her——
Ter. Then persist!
When I do not persist—whene'er my heart
Forgets the fond idea—ha! take heed—
Your colour dies by fits, and now, again,
It flushes o'er your cheek—if beauty's power
Can waken soft desire—and sure such beauty
May warm the breast of stoic apathy—
If thou can'st love, resign the trust at once.
For Oh! to lose her, to behold those charms,
That all-perfection yielded to another,
Were the worst agony, the keenest stab
That ever pierced a lover to the soul.
The thought, the very thought inflames to madness!
Rhad. [*Aside.*] Not till the fever of his mind subsides,
Must I reveal me—the disclosure, now,
Would to his phrenzy give a whirlwind's wing,
And bury all in ruin—let her, then,
Yes, Teribazus, let the blooming maid,
Still in this camp, a voluntary captive—
Since you will have it so—since weak mistrust
Can taint a noble spirit—let her here
Teach that rare beauty to display its charms,
Its various graces; bid those radiant eyes
Dart their quick glances to the tyrant's soul,
Inflame his hot desires, and half absolve them.
Ter. Madness and horror! no! haste, fly, begone,
And give her hence safe conduct; I can trust
To Roman continence—your Scipio's praise
Shall be the theme of fame's eternal lip!
Rhad. Thou, too, attend her steps; watch all her ways;
When we have reached the Roman sanctuary,
Then shall such wonders to thy listening ear—
The web which fate has wove——beware, my friend—
Tigranes comes—what would'st thou, sir?

Enter TIGRANES.

Tig. The king
Grants you one parley more——even now, this way
He bends his steps——remote from all, he means
To hold a private conference——
Rhad. Rome's ambassador
Attends his pleasure. [*Exit* TIG.
Ter. I must hence, Flamminius——
Farewell! yet, ere thou goest, I still must crave
Another interview—farewell! remember,
My love, my life, my all depend on thee. [*Exit.*
Rhad. Ah! luckless prince! how lost in error's maze!
Blindly he wanders, and love's sweet delusion
Infuses its enchantment through his heart!
But when removed from Pharasmanes' power,
He learns my prior claim, his generous friendship
Will bound with transport at a brother's joys,
And with a warmth of sympathy partake them.
But ha! My father! Grant me strength, ye powers,
To meet the dread encounter!

Enter PHARASMANES.

Phar. Once again,
Ere you depart, if Pharasmanes deign
To treat, and thus expostulate with Rome,
'Tis to thy prayers I grant it.
Rhad. Rome had rather
Persuade than conquer; her well-balanced justice—
Phar. No more of Roman justice——blazon not
Virtues you ne'er have practised——with the name,
The specious name of love for human kind,
You sanctify the insatiate rage of conquest,
And where the sword has made a solitude,
That you proclaim a peace. Even now your views
Stand manifest to sight—to thee 'tis known
That Rhadamistus lives!
Rhad. How, sir! can he—

Does that unhappy prince—
Phar. Thou false dissembler!
Yes, in thy heart the fatal secret's lodged!
Rhad. Sir, if your son—if you will search his heart—
Phar. From certain fugitives I have learned it all—
In yonder camp, concealed from vulgar eyes,
To war against his father still he lives!
Why dost thou droop dejected? something lurks
Beneath that burning blush—
Rhad. That burning blush
Glows on my cheek for thee—I know your son,
And know him unsusceptible of guilt.
Phar. Then Roman, mark my words; would'st thou prevent
The carnage fate prepares on yonder plains,
Go, tell Paulinus, I will treat of terms
With him, who brings me Rhadamistus' head.
Rhad. Your own son's head!
Phar. Why dost thou gaze so earnest?
Why those emotions struggling for a vent?
Rhad. Amazement checks my voice, and, lost in wonder,
I view the unnatural father, who would bathe
His hands in blood, in a son's blood—a son
Who pants, with ardour pants, on terms of peace,
To sheathe the sword, and with a filial hand
To throw a veil over a father's crimes.
Phar. By Heaven 'tis false—has he not dared to league
With my determined foes! even to the senate,
To every region where his voice could pierce,
Has he not fled with the delusive story?
With grief and loud complaints inflamed the world?
And even now, does not the stripling come
To the Araxes' banks with Rome in arms?
Rhad. Though urged by dire constraint, yet Heaven can witness
His strong reluctance.
Phar. Let the rebel know
He never shall ascend Armenia's throne.
Rhad. And shall destruction, with her horrid train,
Stalk o'er the land?
Phar. Yes! let destruction loose!
'Tis Pharasmanes' glory.
Rhad. Can the rage,
And the wild tumult of destructive havoc
Administer delight? alas! the day
That deluges the land with human blood,
Is that a day of glory?———
I, sir, have traversed o'er the field of death,
Where war had spent its rage. Had'st thou beheld
That scene of horror, where unnumbered wretches,
In mangled heaps, lay weltering in their gore;
Where the fond father, in the gasp of death,
Wept for his children; where the lover sighed
For her, whom never more his eyes should view;
Where various misery sent forth its groans:
Had'st thou beheld that scene, the touch of nature
Had stirred within thee, and the virtuous drop
Of pity gushed unbidden from thy eye.
Phar. Enervate slave! here ends all further parley.
Go tell your general, tell your Roman chiefs,
The father claims his son.—Have we not heard
How your own Brutus to the lictor's sword
Condemned his children? and would Rome dispute
A king's paternal power? let them yield up
The treacherous boy, or, terrible in arms,
Shall Pharasmanes overwhelm their legions,
Mow down their cohorts, and their mangled limbs
Give to the vulture's beak.
Rhad. And yet reflect—
Phar. Roman, no more.
Rhad. Unwilling, I withdraw;
A father's stern resolve the son shall mourn,
And with a pang of nature shall behold
The Roman eagle dart like thunder on thee.
[*Exit.*
Phar. Away, and leave me, slave! to-morrow's sun
Shall see my great revenge—mean time, I give
The gentle hours to love and Ariana.
What, ho! Tigranes!

Enter TIGRANES.

Phar. Does the stubborn fair
Yield to my ardent vows?
Tig. She mocks your passion,
And gives to Teribazus all her smiles.
Phar. By Heaven! even love itself shall be my slave!
Yet love like mine requires her soft consent,
And will not riot o'er her plundered charms.
Quick, bring her father to me———
Tig. By your orders
At hand Megistus waits your sovereign will.
[*Exit.*
Phar. Bring him before us—wise and prudent age
Will plead my cause, and second my desires.

Enter MEGISTUS.

Meg. Dread sir,—a blameless, a distressed old man,
Of guilt unconscious——
Phar. Whatsoe'er thy guilt,
A smile from Ariana expiates all.
Meg. Believe me, sir, I never have offended;
She was my sole delight; my age's comfort;
For her I felt more than a parent's love——
But 'midst the troubles that distract the land
I lost her. In despair, with yearning heart,
I ranged the country round in fond pursuit.
This is my crime; sure 'tis no crime to love
Such blooming innocence!
Phar. Dispel thy fears,
Thy love for Ariana speaks thy virtue.
That graceful form, that symmetry of shape,
That bloom, those features, those love-darting eyes,
All, all attract, that there each fond admirer

Could ever gaze, enamoured of her charms.
Meg. Alas! whate'er the symmetry of shape,
Whate'er the grace that revels in her features,
Glows in her bloom, or sparkles in her eye,
They all are transient beauties, soon to fade,
And leave inanimate that decent form.
Inward affliction saps the vital frame,
Incurable affliction! fixed in woe,
Her eyes for ever, motionless and dim,
Gaze on the fancied image of her husband.
Phar. Her husband!
Meg. Yes; a husband severed from her
By fatal chance! him she for ever sees
With fancy's gushing eye, and seeks him still
In fond excursions of delusive thought.
She pines each hour, and even in blooming dies?
As drooping roses, while the worm, unseen,
Preys on their fragrant sweets, still beauteous look,
And waste their aromatic lives in air.
Phar. The rose, transplanted to a warmer sky,
Shall raise its languid head, and all be well.
Meg. Her husband still survives, and far remote
He wanders in Armenia's realm——
Phar. No more
To call her his! by all my promised joys,
His doom is fixed! do thou straight seek thy daughter,
My loveliest Ariana; in her ear
Breathe the mild accents of a father's voice,
And reconcile her heart to love and me.
Meg. Your pardon, sir; it were not fit my voice
Should teach her to betray her holy vows.
Phar. When Pharasmanes speaks—
Meg. My life is his,
And when he wills it, 'tis devoted to him——
But, sir, though poor, my honour still is mine;
'Tis all that Heaven has given me, and that gift
The gods expect I never should resign.
Phar. And dost thou hesitate? what, when a crown
Invites thy daughter to imperial splendour!
Meg. Oh! not for me such splendour! I have lived
My humble days in virtuous poverty.
To tend my flock, to watch each rising flower,
Each herb, each plant that drinks the morning dew,
And lift my praise to the just gods on high—
These were my habits, these my only cares;
These hands sufficed to answer my desires,
And having naught, yet naught was wanting to me.
Phar. Away, thou slave! I would not quite despise thee——
Or yield your daughter, or my swiftest vengeance
Falls on thy hoary head—a monarch's love
Shall seize her trembling to his eager arms,
Then spurn her back a prey to wan despair,
Till bitter anguish blast each withered charm,
And rave in vain for love and empire scorned!
[*Exit.*
Meg. Fell monster, go! inexorable tyrant!
Perhaps I should have soothed his lion rage
With feigned compliance—ha!—why sudden thus——

Enter ZENOBIA.

Zen. The important hour, Megistus, now approaches.
Lo! the last blushes of departing day
But feebly streak yon dim horizon's verge.
My Rhadamistus comes to guide my steps——
Through devious paths seek thou Zopiron's tent;
Thus we shall lull suspicion.
Meg. I obey;
May guardian angels spread their wings around thee! [*Exit.*
Zen. Yes, the blessed Gods, who, through the maze of fate,
Have led us once again to meet in life,
Will prove the friends of virtue to the last.
Ha! Teribazus comes!

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. And is it given
Once more to see thee here? dost thou avoid me?
Dost thou despise me in this tender moment,
When my soul bleeds with anguish at the thought
Of parting with thee? Ariana!
Zen. Oh!
Unhappy prince! Oh! fly me; shun me; death
And ruin follow—one short moment's stay
Will rouse your father's rage.
Ter. My father's rage
Already has undone me—ah! in tears!
And do they fall for me? does that soft sigh
Heave for the lost, afflicted Teribazus?
Zen. Yes, the tear falls, and the sigh heaves, for thee;
Thy elegance of mind, the various graces
That bloom around thee, and adorn the hero,
Nay, other ties there are, which strongly plead,
And bid me tremble for thee.
And yet—sad recompense for all thy friendship,
To warn thee hence, to bid thee shun my ways,
Is all the gratitude I now can offer.
Ter. Thus must we part?
Zen. A rival is at hand,
Here in the camp—an unexpected rival,
Sent by the gods—the idol of my soul!
Ter. What say'st thou, Ariana? has another
Usurped thy heart? Unkind, relentless maid!
Since first thy beauty dawned upon my sight,
How have I lov'd, repented, yet lov'd on!
Even against you, against myself I struggled—
Present I fled you—absent I ador'd—
I fled for refuge to the forest's gloom,
But in the forest's gloom thy image met me!
The shades of night, the lustre of the day,
All, all retraced my Ariana's form.
Thy form pursued me in the battle's rage,
'Midst shouts, and all the clangor of the war.
It stole me from myself!—my lonely tent
Re-echoes with my groans, and in the ranks
The wondering soldier hears my voice no more.
Zen. Yet leave me, Teribazus—generous youth!

Remembrance oft shall dwell upon thy praise;
But, for my love, 'tis all another's claim.
Ter. Another's claim! why wilt thou torture thus
A fond, despairing wretch?—oh! not for me
Those sorrows fall—they are another's tears:—
Another claims them from me—name this rival,
That my swift fury—tell me, has Flamminius,
Has the base Roman broke his promised faith?
Will not the barbarous man afford you shelter?
Zen. Why wilt thou force me speak? the fate of all,
Thine, Teribazus—mine—the fate of one,
Whom, were he known—thy heart holds ever dear,
Is now concerned—Flamminius claims my love;
Long since he won my heart——
Ter. Vindictive gods!
Flamminius claims thy love! not Cæsar's self
Shall dare to wrest thee from me—Ariana!
Thus on my knees—would I could perish here,
That even in death I still might gaze upon thee,
Till the last pang divide thee from my heart.

Enter RHADAMISTUS.

Rhad. It was the voice of anguish and despair!
Why thus, illustrious prince——
Ter. [*Starting up.*] Thou treacherous Roman!
Who com'st to violate each sacred tie,
The laws of honour, and the laws of love!
Who com'st beneath the mask of public faith
To do a robber's work!
Rhad. When to your camp
I bring a heart that longs to serve you, prince,
Why this intemperate rage?
Ter. To do the work
Of perfidy and fraud! but first by rapine,
By violated maids, your city grew;
And do you come to emulate your sires,
Unwilling to degenerate in vice?
Rhad. Mistaken youth!—Oh! if you did but know me!
If you but knew the justice Rome intends—
Ter. Justice and Rome! and dost thou dare to join
Two names so opposite?—have we not heard
Of frugal consuls, and of stoic chiefs,
Who soon forgetting here their Sabine farms,
Made war a trade, and then returned to Rome,
Rich with the plunder of the rifled east?
Again some new Lucullus leads them on,
Fired with the love of rapine.
Rhad. Fired with zeal
To break a nation's chains—would'st thou but hear me—
It is a friend implores——
Zen. A generous friend!
Then listen to him—let these streaming eyes,
These earnest prayers, this supplicating form——
Ter. Leagued with my foe, behold her!—— mighty gods!
Have I deserved it of her?
Rhad. Yet be calm——
Yet listen to me—Oh! I could unfold——
Yet stay—I'll prove myself a brother to thee.
Ter. Roman, expect me in the battle's front—
Instant depart—but leave thy prey behind;—
Dare not—I charge thee dare not, tempt her hence!
To-morrow's sun shall see me, clothed in terror,
Pursue thy steps through all the ranks of war,
Till my spear fix thee quivering to the ground.
[*Exit.*
Zen. Yet, Rhadamistus, call him——let him know——
Rhad. Thou lovely trembler! banish every fear——
The time now bids us hence—and lo! the moon
Streams her mild radiance on the rustling grove.
I will conduct thee—ha! Zopiron——

Enter ZOPIRON.

Come,
Thou best of men! let me once more embrace thee.
Zop. Oh! speed thee hence—each moment's big with death——
Rhad. Farewell! farewell! when I've escaped your camp,
Seek thou my brother; sooth his troubled spirit;
Explain these wonders; tell him Rhadamistus
Esteems and loves, and honours all his virtues.
Farewell, Zopiron!—in Armenia's court
Thy king shall thank thy goodness—my Zenobia,
Oh! let me guide thee from this place of danger,
To life, to love, to liberty and joy.
[*Exit with* ZEN.
Zop. Lo! the heavens smile with gentlest aspect on them!—
This calm serene, that every planet sheds,
To light their steps—this glad ætherial mildness,
Is sure the token of encircling gods,
That hover anxious o'er the solemn scene!

Enter PHARASMANES, TIGRANES *following.*

Phar. Let Teribazus straight attend our presence——
Tig. But now, with glaring eye and fierce demeanour,
He entered yonder tent——
Phar. Bid him approach us.
Then do thou round the midnight watch, and see
That Rome's ambassador has left my camp.
[*Exit* TIG.
This war, Zopiron, shall be soon extinguished
In Roman blood, and yield Armenia to me.
Zop. Armenia, sir, still obstinately mourns
Lost Mithridates, father of his people.
Her hardy sons, with one consenting voice,
Demand a king from Rome; all leagued and sworn
Never to crouch beneath the conqueror's yoke.
Phar. But, when the Roman eagle bites the ground,
They'll shrink aghast, and own my sovereign sway.

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Phar. Thou base confederate with thy father's foes!
Ter. The accusation, sir, if proof support it,

Gives you my forfeit life, and I resign it,
Freely resign—if destitute of proof,
It is a stab to honour, and the charge
Should not be lightly urged.
Phar. This arrogance
That dictates to a father——
Ter. 'Tis the spirit
Of injured innocence—if Pharasmanes
Suspect my truth send me where danger calls;
Bid me this moment carry death and slaughter
To rage in yonder camp; yes, then, your son
Shall mark his hatred of the Roman name.
Phar. Hast thou not dared to thwart my tenderest passion,
And to seduce my Ariana's love?
Ter. And. if this youthful heart, too prone to melt
At beauty's ray, received the gentle flame,
'Tis past—the charm is o'er—no longer now
I walk a captive in her haughty triumph!
In vain she now may call forth all her graces,
Instruct her eyes to roll with bidden fires,
And practise all the wonders of her face.
Ambition calls, and lights a nobler flame.

Enter TIGRANES.

Tig. The ambassador of Rome, and that old traitor,
The false Megistus——
Phar. Speak; unfold thy purpose.
Tig. Together left the camp, and in their train
Bear Ariana with them——
Ter. Ariana!
Have the slaves dared—detested treachery!
Now, now, my father, now approve my zeal!
Phar. Haste! fly! pursue her! bring the traitress back!
Ter. My rapid vengeance shall o'ertake their flight,
And bring the Roman plunderer bound in chains.
[*Exit.*
Phar. Do thou, Tigranes, with a chosen band
Circle yon hills, and intercept their march.
And thou, Zopiron, send my swiftest horse
To range the wood, and sweep along the vale.
[*Exit* TIG.
Zop. Ye guardian deities, now lend your aid!
[*Exit.*
Phar. [*Alone.*] Has the perfidious, yet adored deceiver,
Thus has she left me? from a monarch's smile,
Fled with a lawless ravager from Rome?
Oh! give me vengeance; give Flamminius to me,
That he may die in agony unheard of.
The traitress, then—spite of each winning art,
Spite of her guilt, she triumphs in my heart.
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter PHARASMANES.

Phar. Not yet returned! I am tortured on the rack—
By heaven, to-morrow's dawn——distracting thought!
Ere that, the Roman ravager enjoys
Her heaven of bliss, and riots in delight.
My soul's on fire—this night I'll storm his camp,
And dash his promised joys; let loose my rage,
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
And bury all in ruin—ha! what means
This new alarm?

Enter TERIBAZUS, *Soldiers, &c.*

Ter. The treacherous slave is taken!
My speed outstripped him, and this arm, that seized,
Hath well secured the traitor.
Phar. Great revenge,
The measure of thy joys is full!
Ter. At first
They made a feeble stand; but, hemmed around,
And close encircled by the sons of Asia,
They saw death threatening at each javelin's point.
I rushed upon Flamminius—much he courted
A secret parley, but my soul disdained
All further conference—he and his complotter,
The base Megistus, with the fair deserter,
Remeasure back their steps, and clank their chains
In bitterness of heart.
Phar. A father's thanks
Shall well requite thee—lo! the traitors come.

Enter RHADAMISTUS, ZENOBIA, MEGISTUS, *in chains.*

Phar. Thou base perfidious! thou Italian plunderer!
Rhad. I do not mean to wage a war of words.
Repent thee of this insult, of these chains
On him, who represents a people here.
Phar. Anon thou'lt see how I respect that people.
My just revenge shall tell thee; on thy head,
And thine, Megistus, sudden vengeance falls.
Meg. Alas! worn out with age and misery,
I long to lay me in the shroud of death.
Phar. I grant thy wish—what words, fair fugitive,
Can colour thy deceit?
Zen. The heart resolved
Wants no excuse, no colouring of words.
I found my husband, flew to his embrace;
This, this is he! the lord of my desires—
With him, content, I'll traverse o'er the world.
Phar. Dost thou avow it too?

Zen. Do I avow it?
Yes, I exult, I glory in it—Think'st thou
I'll prove so meanly false to honour's cause,
As to apologize for being faithful?
Ter. I see Flamminius has already schooled her
In Roman maxims——
Rhad. Miserable prince!
I will not answer thee—too soon thy heart
For this last feat will bitterly reproach thee!
Ter. Away with thy delusive arts—if ever
I form alliance with that haughty people,
Those ravagers of earth, if e'er again
I hold communion with thee, may the gods—
May Pharasmanes—but it cannot be—
My heart, high-beating in my country's cause,
Vows an eternal enmity with Rome. [*Exit.*
Rhad. Thee, Pharasmanes, thee my voice addresses—
Thou know'st my title to her—Hymen's rites
Long since united both——Then loose these chains;
'Tis in the name of Rome I ask it——
Phar. Slave!
Thy title, by the rights of war, is now extinguished.
Captivity dissolves her former ties,
And now the laws of arms have made her mine.
Zen. And are there laws to change the human heart?
To alter the affections of the soul?
Know that my heart is ruled by other laws,
The laws of truth, of honour, and of love.
This is my husband! source of all my comfort!
With him I'll live—with him will dare to die!
Phar. By Heaven, some mystery—thou treacherous fair!
Mark well my words——unfold thy birth and rank—
My mind, uncertain, wanders in conjecture—
Who, and what art thou? Vain is every guess—
Resolve my doubts, or else the Roman's doom
Shall be determined straight——
Zen. And my resolve,
Tyrant, is fixed to share my husband's fate.
That I unfold—that sentiment reveal—
To Heaven and earth reveal it—for the rest,
Guess if you can, determine if you dare.
Phar. Quick, drag Flamminius hence—
Rhad. Slaves, hold your hands—
My character protects me here——
Phar. Dispatch!
Instant dispatch, and seize Megistus, too!
[MEGISTUS *is led off.*
Zen. Horror! call back the word—it shall not be—
Here will I hold him—barbarous ruffians, hold—
Murder! my life! my lord! my husband! oh!
[RHADAMISTUS *is dragged off.*
Phar. Give him the torture; let your keenest pangs
Extort each secret from him——
Zen. Pharasmanes!
Thus lowly humbled, prostrate in the dust,
Washing your feet with tears—have mercy! this
Will be the blackest, worst of all your murders.
Phar. There's but one way to mitigate his doom.
Zen. Give me to know it—spare him—spare his life!
Phar. Abjure the slave, and, by connubial vows,
This instant make thee partner of my throne.
Zen. My faith, my love, my very life is his—
My child is his—oh! think thou seest my infant
Lifting his little hands—
Phar. I'll hear no more;
Or yield this moment, or the traitor dies.
[*Exit* PHARASMANES.
Zen. [*Alone.*] Inhuman tyrant! madness seize my brain!
Swallow me, earth! here shall these desperate hands
Strike on thy flinty bosom, here my voice
Pierce to thy centre, till, with pity touched,
Your caverns open wide to hide a wretch
From hated men, from misery like this.

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Afflicted mourner, raise thee from the earth.
Zen. What voice is that? I know thee well—thou art
That fiend accurst, the murderous Teribazus!
Yes, thou art welcome! [*Rising.*] Thou delight'st in blood—
I am your willing victim; plunge your sword
Deep in my heart; I'll thank thee for the stroke,
Since thou hast murdered all my soul held dear.
Ter. Assuage this storm of grief, nor blame a lover
That dotes, like me——could I behold that form
Snatched from my arms?
Zen. You know not what you've done—
Your blameless brother—
Ter. How!
Zen. You've murdered him——
Your brother Rhadamistus——
Ter. Rhadamistus!
Zen. By thee he dies—that is your splendid deed——
Ter. What say'st thou? he my brother—urge me not
To instant madness—is he—tell me—say—
Art thou Zenobia?
Zen. Yes, that fatal wretch!
Ter. If this be so——what had I done, ye powers!
To merit this extremity of woe—
Why did'st thou hide the awful secret from me?
Zen. Could I betray him—could I trust your father,
Whose fell ambition, whose relentless rage,
Has fixed a price on our devoted heads?
Ter. Then shall this hated being—no! I'll live
To save a brother still—he shall not die—
Oh! let me seek him, throw me at his feet,
Implore forgiveness, and protract his days.
[*Exit* TERIBAZUS.

Zen. It is in vain—he's lost—we both must perish——
And then my child—who then shall guard his youth?
No more these eyes shall see him—my sweet boy
Will break his heart, and unregarded die!

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zop. All's lost! all ruined!—to the cave of death
Even now the guards lead Rhadamistus forth.
Zen. Thou seest the sad reverse!—immortal spirits,
Ye winged virtues, that, with pitying eye,
Watch the afflicted! will ye not inspire,
In this sad hour, one great, one glorious thought,
Above the vulgar flight of common souls,
To save, at once, my husband and my child?—
The inspiration comes! the bright idea
Expands my heart, and charms my glowing soul.
Zop. My gracious queen, let not a blind despair——
Zen. Talk not, Zopiron, when the god inspires!
The god! the god!—my heart receives him all—
My lord, my Rhadamistus still shall live. [*Exit.*
Zop. Yet, I conjure thee, hear thy faithful slave! [*Follows her out.*

SCENE II.

Enter RHADAMISTUS *and Guards.*

Rhad. Say, whither do you lead me?—does your tyrant
Repent this horrid outrage?

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Guards, withdraw
To a remoter ground. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*
Rhad. Mistaken prince!
My heart bleeds for thee———
Ter. Oh! too well I know
The depth of guilt in which the fates have plunged me.
I cannot look upon thee.
Rhad. Oh! my brother,
Thus, let me, even in ruin, thus embrace thee!
Ter. Dost thou forgive me?—could I e'er have thought
To see thee here? my rashness has undone thee!
Rhad. No, thou art innocent—the guilt is mine,
The guilt of mean, ungenerous policy,
Of selfish wisdom, disingenuous art,
That from a friend kept back the fatal secret,
When, with the ardour of unbounded confidence,
I should have rushed with transport to thy arms,
Unbosomed all, and wrapt thee in my heart.
Ter. Alas! I've heaped these horrors on your head—
I've sealed thy doom—that is a brother's gift—
The first essay of Teribazus' friendship!
But I am doomed to be a wretch abhorred,
Of men and gods abhorred! doomed, like my father,
To drench these murderous hands in brother's blood!
Rhad. Embitter not the pangs that rive my soul—
Where is Zenobia?—unrelenting powers!
Was it for this your persecuting wrath
Gave me to meet her, gave that angel-sweetness
To these delighted eyes, these eager arms?
Ter. I'll give you freedom still—by Heaven I will—
Rhad. Was she but given me to afflict her more?
To wake in that dear breast a gleam of joy,
A mockery of joy—joy, scarce, ye powers!
Divided by the moment of delight
From black despair, from agony and death?
Ter. I will protect her, will restore her to thee,
Or do a deed shall strike mankind with horror!
Not even a father shall retard my sword—
In his own blood I'll drench it.
Rhad. Ha!——
Ter. This hand,
Ere thou shalt fall a victim to his fury,
Shall to the heart, the inhuman heart of him
Who dares—
Rhad. No more of that—can I consent,
That a brave generous youth, a much-loved brother,
For every virtue famed, shall thus debase,
By an atrocious deed, his fair renown,
And perpetrate a dark insidious work?
Oh! I should well deserve the worst of ills—
I then should justify a father's cruelty!
Ter. He has undone thee, has undone us all,
But yet thou shalt not die—by Heaven I swear—
Yes, take me, horror! pour into my heart
Thy blackest purpose—nerve my lifted arm
To dash him headlong from his glittering throne,
A terrible example to the world.
Rhad. Beware, beware, my brother—yet reflect—
You would strike vice with terror—tell me, then,
Would not the act of rash impetuous zeal,
Would not the example arm the ruffian's hand?
Thy virtue thus inflames thy generous ardour—
But oh! my brother, let it not be said,
That virtue ever held the murderer's knife!
Ter. Gods! have I ruined such unheard-of goodness?
Swift I'll dispatch a message to Paulinus,
And call his legions to assault the camp.

Enter TIGRANES, *and Guards.*

Tig. Guards, seize your prisoner—in a dungeon's gloom,
Plunge him sequestered from the light of heaven.
'Tis Pharasmanes' will——
Ter. Thou meddling fiend!
I will attend his steps; will still protect him
From men like thee——
Rhad. Should Pharasmanes dare
To violate the rights of public law,
Rome is at hand, and will have ample vengeance.
[*Exit with* TER.

Tig. My thirst of vengeance shall be sated first.
Yes, guard him, prince; it makes thy ruin sure!
Thy Ariana, too, while fate is busy,
Shall meet her doom, and leave my road to glory
All smooth and level to ambition's wish.

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zop. 'Gainst Rome's ambassador, the king, Tigranes,
Suspends his sentence till his further orders.
The queen commands it, too.
Tig. The queen! what queen?
Zop. The beauteous Ariana; now your sovereign.
Tig. Has she relented? is she married to him?
Zop. She is—the scene with various passions burned!
Her tresses all unbound, with faded charms,
Yet lovely even in sorrow, through the ranks
Eager she flew, with shrieks, with outstretched arms,
Invoking every god! the wondering soldier,
With softened sinews, dropt the sword to earth,
And gazed, with mixed emotions, as she passed.
Prone to the ground, at Pharasmanes' feet
She fell—he raised her soon, and smiled consent—
To the king's tent she pressed with eager speed—
The exulting monarch called his priests around him,
And soon, with solemn march and festive song,
In his pavilion sought the blooming bride.
Tig. This sudden change, Zopiron, this rash haste,
I like it not.
Zop. Nor I, Tigranes: doubt,
Suspicion, fear, and wonder, and mistrust,
Rise in each anxious thought.
Tig. But, didst thou see
The ceremony closed?
Zop. I did: at first
All pale and trembling Ariana stood:
Then, more collected, with undaunted step,
She to the altar bore the nuptial cup.
There reverent bowed, and 'hear, ye gods!' she said,
'Hear! and record the purpose of my soul!'
With trembling lips then kissed the sacred vase,
And, as our country's solemn rites require,
Drank of the hallowed liquor. From her hand
The king received it, and, with eager joy,
As to his soul he took the nectared draught,
With stedfast eye she viewed him, whilst a smile
Of sickly joy gleamed faintly o'er her visage.
Tig. Well, she's our queen——the diadem is her's——
Zop. How long to wear it, Heaven alone can tell.

SCENE II.—*The back scene draws, and discovers the king's pavilion, with an altar, and fire blazing on it; soft music is played, and they come forward.*

Enter PHARASMENES *and* ZENOBIA.

Phar. At length my Ariana's soft compliance
Endears the present bliss, and gives an earnest
Of joy, to brighten a long train of years.
Zen. Alas! fond man expatiates oft in fancy,
Unconscious of the fates, and oft, in thought,
Anticipates a bliss he ne'er enjoys.
Phar. Away with gloomy care, for thou art mine;
Thou, Ariana! all our future days
Shall smile with gay, with ever-young desire,
And not a cloud o'er-cast the bright serene.
Zen. And does thy penetrating eye pervade
What time has yet in store?
Phar. Why dost thou ask?
Zen. I have been used to grief——release the Roman,
And give him hence safe conduct to his friends;
I then shall be at peace.
Phar. Beware, beware!
Nor rouse again the pangs, that fire a soul,
Which fiercely doats like mine.
Zen. Dismiss him hence;
Give him his life—it was your marriage vow
He should not suffer—let me see him first;
Grant me one interview, one little hour;
In that poor space I can crowd all that's left me
Of love, and tenderness, and fond concern,
Before we part for ever—
Phar. Fond concern!
And love, and tenderness! and shall the Roman
Usurp a monarch's due? that look betrays
The secret workings of a heart estranged!
And shall the man, who dares dispute my love,
Shall the slave breathe a moment? Haste, Tigranes,
And see immediate execution on him.
[*Exit* TIGRANES.
Zen. Oh! stay, Tigranes——barbarous man, recall
The horrid mandate——
Phar. By immortal love,
I see the slave still triumphs in your heart.
Zen. Oh! spare him, spare him! by the vital air,
By your own promised faith— [*Kneels to him.*
Phar. Since loved by thee,
His doom is doubly sealed.
Zen. You shall not fly me—
Now tear me, drag me, grovelling in the dust,
Tear off these hands—tear, tear me piece-meal first—
Phar. Nay, then, since force must do it—
[*Shakes her off.*
Zen. Barbarous tyrant!
[*She lies stretched on the ground.*
Phar. I go to see the minion of your heart
Expire in pangs before me—ha! what means
This more than winter's frost that chills my veins!
Zen. [*Looking up.*] That groan revives, and calls me back to life!
Phar. I cannot move—each vital function's lost—

The purple current of my blood is stopt—
I freeze—I burn—Oh! 'tis the stroke of death—
[*Falls on the ground.*
Zen. [*Rising.*] Yes, tyrant, yes; it is the stroke of death,
And I inflict it—I have done it all—
Phar. Pernicious traitress! thou!
Zen. My vengeance did it—
Zenobia's vengeance! 'tis Zenobia strikes!
Zenobia executes her justice on thee!
Phar. Oh! dire, accurst event! art thou Zenobia?
Zen. Yes, thou fell monster, know me for Zenobia!
Know, the ambassador is Rhadamistus!
Haste thee, Zopiron, and proclaim him king.
[*Exit* ZOP.
Phar. May curses light upon thee——Oh! I die!
And racks and wheels disjoint me—
Zen. Writhe in torment,
In fiercer pangs than my dear father knew.
But I revenge his death—I dashed the cup
With precious poison!—[*A flourish of trumpets.*]
—ha! now, tyrant, wake,
And hear those sounds—my Rhadamistus reigns!
Phar. What, and no help! it is too late—the fates,
The fiends surround me—more than Ætna's fires
Burn in my veins—yet Heaven—no—'tis in vain—
I cannot rise—my crimes—my ten-fold crimes—
They pull me! oh!— [*Dies.*
Zen. There fled the guilty spirit!
Shade of my father, view your daughter now!
Behold her struggling in a righteous cause!
Behold her conquering in the tyrant's camp!
Behold your murderer levelled in the dust!
[*A second flourish of trumpets.*
Rhad. [*Within the scenes.*] Where is Zenobia?
Zen. Rhadamistus, here!

Enter RHADAMISTUS, TERIBAZUS, MEGISTUS, ZOPIRON, *&c.*

Rhad. Oh! let me, let me thus—thus pour my soul,
Thus speak my joy—thus melt within thy arms!
Zen. My lord! my life! my Rhadamistus! come,
Grow to my heart—that bounds and springs to meet thee.
Rhad. Once more revived, and snatched again from death,
Thus do I see thee? these are speechless joys,
And tears alone express them—
Zen. Have I saved thee?
All-gracious gods! 'tis rapture in the extreme!
Rhad. My sweet deliverer! my all of bliss!
Zen. Oh! it is joy too exquisite! and yet
Grief will embitter ecstacy like this!
There lies your father!
Rhad. All his crimes
Be buried with him! nature will have way,
And o'er his corse thus sheds the filial tear.
Ter. Oh! that my tears could wash away his stains!
Zen. Wilt thou forgive his murderer?
Rhad. For thee,
Beset with wrongs, and injured as thou wert,
In every region fame shall clap her wings,
And the recording muse applaud thy virtue.
Zen. If thou forgiv'st me, I am blessed indeed!
Now we shall part no more—Megistus, too!
Thou good old man! Let me embrace thee——Ha!
Meg. The blood forsakes her cheek—her eyes are fixed!
Zen. Support me—help me—Oh! I die—I die— [*Falls in* MEGISTUS' *arms.*
Rhad. She faints—her colour dies. Revive, Zenobia!
Revive, my love! thy Rhadamistus thus,
Thus calls your fluttering spirit back to life!
Zen. It will not be—the toil of life is o'er—
My Rhadamistus— [*Sinks down on the ground.*
Rhad. Must I lose thee, then?
Zen. Oh! the envenomed cup! the marriage rites
Required that I should drink it first myself—
There was no other way—I did it freely
To save thy life—to save thee for my child.——
Rhad. Art thou a victim for a wretch like me?
Is there no antidote to stop the course
Of this vile poison?
Zen. None—it rages now—
It rages through my veins——my eyes grow dim——
They are lost in darkness—oh! I cannot see thee—
Where art thou, Rhadamistus? must I breathe
Longer in life, and never see thee more!
And are my eyes forbid one dear farewell?
Oh! cruel stars! must they not fix on thee
The last expiring glance!
Rhad. Relentless powers!
There lies Zenobia! round that pallid beauty
Call your etherial host, each winged virtue;
Call every angel down; bid them behold
That matchless excellence, and then refuse
Soft pity if they can!
Zen. Megistus, seek my child,
And bring him to his father—Rhadamistus,
Wilt thou protect him? My sweet orphan-babe,
I leave thee, too!—oh!—train him up in virtue—
Wilt thou be fond of him—a mother's fondness
My child should meet—oh! raise me, Rhadamistus—
Give me thy hand—my little infant—Oh!—
[*Dies.*
Rhad. Tears, you do well to stop—your wretched drops
Are unavailing at a sight like this!
And art thou gone? ah! thus defaced and pale,
Thus do I see thee? is that ghastly form
All that is left me of thee? give me daggers,
Give me some instant means of death, my friends,
That I may throw this load of life away,
And let our hearts be both inurned together!

Ter. Live, live, my brother, for your infant son—
Let him prevail—
Rhad. Inhuman that thou art!
Think you I'll stay imprisoned here in life,
When there—behold her—how she smiles in death!—
When there that form——think ye I'll linger here?
Dead, dead, Zenobia! still I have thee thus—
You ne'er shall part us——this at least I'll hold,
And cling for ever to these pale, pale charms;
Here breathe my last, and, faithful still in death,
Love shall unite us in one peaceful grave.
Meg. Now, old Megistus, gods! has lived too long!
Ter. Bring every aid, all medicinal skill,
To call a wretched brother back to life,
And give each lenient balm to woes like his.
From thee, ambition, what misfortunes flow,
To thee, what varied ills weak mortals owe!
'Twas this for years laid desolate the land,
And armed against a son the father's hand;
To black despair poor lost Zenobia drove;
The hapless victim of disastrous love!——
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

BY GARRICK.—SPOKEN BY MRS ABINGTON.

[*She peeps through the curtain.*
How do you all, good folks? In tears for certain,
I'll only take a 'peep behind the curtain.'
You're all so full of tragedy and sadness,
For me to come among ye, would be madness:
This is no time for giggling—when you've leisure,
Call out for me, and I'll attend your pleasure;
As soldiers hurry at the beat of drum,
Beat but your hands, that instant I will come.
[*She enters upon their clapping.*
This is so good to call me out so soon!—
The Comic Muse by me intreats a boon;
She call'd for Pritchard, her first maid of honour,
And begg'd of her to take the task upon her;
But she,—I'm sure you'll all be sorry for't,
Resigns her place, and soon retires from court:
To bear this loss we courtiers make a shift,
When good folks leave us, worse may have a lift.
The Comic Muse, whose every smile is grace,
And her stage sister, with her tragic face,
Have had a quarrel—each has writ a case;
And on their friends assembled now I wait,
To give you of their difference a true state.
Melpomene complains, when she appears,
For five good acts, in all her pomp of tears,
To raise your souls, and with their raptures wing 'em,
Nay, wet your handkerchiefs, that you may wring 'em,
Some flippant hussey, like myself, comes in,
Crack goes her fan, and, with a giggling grin,
Hey! Presto pass!—all topsey turvy see,
For Ho, ho, ho! is changed for He, he, he!
We own the fault, but 'tis a fault in vogue,
'Tis theirs who call and bawl for—Epilogue!
Oh, shame upon you—for the time to come,
Know better—and go miserable home.
What says our comic goddess?—with reproaches
She vows her sister Tragedy encroaches!
And, spite of all her virtue and ambition,
Is known to have an am'rous disposition:
For in 'False Delicacy' wond'rous sly,
Join'd with a certain Irishman—O fye!
She made you, when you ought to laugh, to cry——
Her sister's smiles with tears she sought to smother,
Rais'd such a tragi-comic kind of pother,
You laugh'd with one eye, while you cried with t'other.
What can be done?——Sad work behind the scenes!
There comic females scold with tragic queens.
Each party different ways the foe assails,
These shake their daggers, those prepare their nails.
'Tis you alone must calm these dire mishaps,
Or we shall still continue pulling caps.
What is your will? I read it in your faces,
That all hereafter take their proper places,
Shake hands, and kiss, and friends, and—burn their cases.

THE GRECIAN DAUGHTER.

BY

MURPHY.

PROLOGUE.

[*Peeping in at the Stage Door.*

Hip! music! music!—Have you more to play?
Somewhat I'd offer—stop your catgut, pray.
Will you permit, and not pronounce me rude,
A bookseller one moment to intrude?
My name is Foolscap;—all my trouble's past,
Fortune hath given me a rare helping cast.
To all my toils a wife hath put a stop:
A devil first; but now I keep a shop.
My master died, poor man! he's out of print!
His widow, she had eyes, and took my hint.
A prey to grief she could not bear to be,
And so turn'd over a new leaf with me.
I drive a trade; have authors in my pay,
Men of all work, per week, per sheet, per day.
Trav'llers, who not one foreign country know,
And past'ral poets—in the sound of Bow;
Translators, from the Greek they never read;
Cantabs and Sophs, in Covent-Garden bred;
Historians, who can't write, who only take
Scissars and paste; cut, vamp; a book they make.
I've treated for this play; can buy it too,
If I could learn what you intend to do.
If, for nine nights, you'll hear this tragic stuff;
I have a newspaper, and there can puff.
A newspaper does wonders! none can be
In debt, in love, dependent, or quite free;
Ugly, or handsome, well, or ill in bed;
Single, or married, or alive, or dead,
But we give life, death, virtue, vice, with ease;
In short, a newspaper does what we please.
There jealous authors at each other bark;
Till truth leaves not one glimpse, no, not one spark;
But lies meet lies, and jostle in the dark.
Our bard within has often felt the dart
Sent from our quiver, levelled at his heart.
I've press'd him, ere he plays this desperate game,
To answer all, and vindicate his name.
But he, convinc'd that all but truth must die,
Leaves to its own mortality the lie.
Would any know while parties fight pell mell,
How he employs his pen?—his play will tell.
To that he trusts; that he submits to you,
Aim'd at your tenderest feelings; moral, new.
The scenes, he hopes, will draw the heart-felt tear;
Scenes that come home to every bosom here.
If this will do, I'll run and buy it straight;
Stay, let me see; I think I'd better wait:
Yes, I'll lie snug, till you have fix'd its fate.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

DIONYSIUS, *Usurper of Syracuse.*
EVANDER, *the deposed King.*
PHOCION, *Husband to Euphrasia.*
MELANTHON, *Friend to Evander.*
PHILOTAS, ARCAS, } *employed in guarding Evander.*
Greek Herald.
CALIPPUS, *Partizan of the Usurper.*
Greek Soldier.
Officer.

WOMEN.

EUPHRASIA, *Daughter of Evander.*
ERIXENE, *her Attendant.*

SCENE,—*Syracuse.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter MELANTHON *and* PHILOTAS.

Melan. Yet, a moment; hear, Philotas, hear me.
Phil. No more; it must not be.
Melan. Obdurate man!
Thus wilt thou spurn me, when a king distressed,
A good, a virtuous, venerable king,
The father of his people, from a throne,
Which long, with every virtue he adorned,
Torn by a ruffian, by a tyrant's hand,
Groans in captivity? In his own palace
Lives a sequestered prisoner? Oh! Philotas,
If thou hast not renounced humanity,
Let me behold my sovereign; once again
Admit me to his presence; let me see
My royal master.
Phil. Urge thy suit no further;
Thy words are fruitless; Dionysius' orders
Forbid access; he is our sovereign now;
'Tis his to give the law, mine to obey.
Melan. Thou can'st not mean it: his to give the law!
Detested spoiler!—his! a vile usurper!
Have we forgot the elder Dionysius,
Surnamed the tyrant? To Sicilia's throne
The monster waded through whole seas of blood.
Sore groaned the land beneath his iron rod,
Till, roused at length, Evander came from Greece,
Like Freedom's genius came, and sent the tyrant,
Stripped of the crown, and to his humble rank
Once more reduced, to roam, for vile subsistence,
A wandering sophist through the realms of Greece.
Phil. Melanthon, yes: full clearly I remember
The splendid day, when all rejoicing Sicily
Hailed her deliverer.
Melan. Shall the tyrant's son
Deduce a title from the father's guilt?
Philotas, thou wert once the friend of goodness;
Thou art a Greek; fair Corinth gave thee birth;
I marked thy growing youth: I need not tell,
With what an equal sway Evander reigned,
How just, how upright, generous, and good!
From every region bards and sages came;
Whate'er of science Egypt stored,
All that the east had treasured, all that Greece
Of moral wisdom taught, and Plato's voice,
Was heard in Sicily. Shall Dionysius
Extinguish every virtue from the land,
Bow to his yoke the necks of freeborn men,
And here perpetuate a tyrant's reign?
Phil. Whate'er his right, to him, in Syracuse,
All bend the knee; his the supreme dominion,
And death and torment wait his sovereign nod.
Melan. But soon that power shall cease: behold his walls
Now close encircled by the Grecian bands;
Timoleon leads them on; indignant Corinth
Sends her avenger forth, arrayed in terror,
To hurl ambition from a throne usurped,
And bid all Sicily resume her rights.
Phil. Thou wert a statesman once, Melanthon; now,
Grown dim with age, thy eye pervades no more
The deep-laid schemes which Dionysius plans.
Know then, a fleet from Carthage even now
Stems the rough billow; and, ere yonder sun,
That, now declining, seeks the western wave,
Shall to the shades of night resign the world,
Thou'lt see the Punic sails in yonder bay,
Whose waters wash the walls of Syracuse.
Melan. Art thou a stranger to Timoleon's name?
Intent to plan, and circumspect to see
All possible events, he rushes on
Resistless in his course! Your boasted master
Scarce stands at bay; each hour the strong blockade
Hems him in closer, and, ere long, thou'lt view
Oppression's iron rod to fragments shivered!
The good Evander then——
Phil. Alas! Evander
Will ne'er behold the golden time you look for!
Melan. How! not behold it! Say, Philotas, speak;
Has the fell tyrant, have his felon murderers—
Phil. As yet, my friend, Evander lives.
Melan. And yet,
Thy dark half-hinted purpose—lead me to him;
If thou hast murdered him——
Phil. By Heaven, he lives!
Melan. Then bless me with one tender interview!
Thrice has the sun gone down, since last these eyes
Have seen the good old king; say, why is this?
Wherefore debarred his presence? Thee, Philotas,
The troops obey, that guard the royal prisoner;
Each avenue to thee is open; thou
Can'st grant admittance; let me, let me see him!
Phil. Entreat no more; the soul of Dionysius
Is ever wakeful; rent with all the pangs
That wait on conscious guilt.
Melan. But when dun night——
Phil. Alas! it cannot be: but mark my words.
Let Greece urge on her general assault.
Dispatch some friend, who may o'erleap the walls,
And tell Timoleon, the good old Evander
Has lived three days, by Dionysius' order,
Locked up from every sustenance of nature,
And life, now wearied out, almost expires.
Melan. If any spark of virtue dwells within thee,
Lead me, Philotas, lead me to his prison.
Phil. The tyrant's jealous care hath moved him thence.
Melan. Ha! moved him, say'st thou?

Phil. At the midnight hour,
Silent conveyed him up the steep ascent,
To where the elder Dionysius formed,
On the sharp summit of the pointed rock,
Which overhangs the deep, a dungeon drear:
Cell within cell, a labyrinth of horror,
Deep caverned in the cliff, where many a wretch,
Unseen by mortal eye, has groaned in anguish,
And died obscure, unpitied, and unknown.
Melan. Clandestine murderer! Yes, there's the scene
Of horrid massacre. Full oft I've walked,
When all things lay in sleep and darkness hush'd,
Yes, oft I've walked the lonely sullen beach,
And heard the mournful sound of many a corse
Plunged from the rock into the wave beneath,
That murmurs on the shore. And means he thus
To end a monarch's life? Oh! grant my prayer;
My timely succour may protect his days;
The guard is yours——
Phil. Forbear; thou plead'st in vain;
And though I feel soft pity throbbing here,
Though each emotion prompts the generous deed,
I must not yield; it were assured destruction.
Farewell! dispatch a message to the Greeks;
I'll to my station; now thou know'st the worst.
[*Exit.*
Melan. Oh, lost Evander! Lost Euphrasia too!
How will her gentle nature bear the shock
Of a dear father, thus in lingering pangs
A prey to famine, like the veriest wretch,
Whom the hard hand of misery hath griped!
In vain she'll rave with impotence of sorrow;
Perhaps provoke her fate: Greece arms in vain;
All's lost; Evander dies!

Enter CALLIPPUS.

Cal. Where is the king?
Our troops, that sallied to attack the foe,
Retire disordered; to the eastern gate
The Greeks pursue; Timoleon rides in blood!
Arm, arm, and meet their fury.
Melan. To the citadel
Direct thy footsteps; Dionysius there,
Marshals a chosen band.
Cal. Do thou call forth
Thy hardy veterans; haste, or all is lost! [*Exit.*
[*Warlike music.*
Melan. Now, ye just gods! now look propitious down;
Now give the Grecian sabre tenfold edge,
And save a virtuous king! [*Warlike music.*

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. War on, ye heroes,
Ye great assertors of a monarch's cause!
Let the wild tempest rage. Melanthon, ha!
Did'st thou not hear the vast tremendous roar?
Down tumbling from its base, the eastern tower
Burst on the tyrant's ranks, and on the plain
Lies an extended ruin.
Melan. Still new horrors
Increase each hour, and gather round our heads.
Euph. The glorious tumult lifts my towering soul.
Once more, Melanthon, once again, my father
Shall mount Sicilia's throne.
Melan. Alas! that hour
Would come with joy to every honest heart,
Would shed divinest blessings from its wing;
But no such hour in all the round of time,
I fear, the fates averse will e'er lead on.
Euph. And still, Melanthon, still does pale despair
Depress thy spirit? Lo! Timoleon comes,
Armed with the power of Greece; the brave,
The just, god-like Timoleon! ardent to redress,
He guides the war, and gains upon his prey.
A little interval shall set the victor
Within our gates triumphant.
Melan. Still my fears
Forebode for thee. Would thou had'st left this place,
When hence your husband, the brave Phocion, fled,
Fled with your infant son!
Euph. In duty fixed,
Here I remained, while my brave generous Phocion
Fled with my child, and from his mother's arms
Bore my sweet little one. Full well thou know'st
The pangs I suffered in that trying moment.
Did I not weep? Did I not rave and shriek,
And by the roots tear my dishevelled hair?
Did I not follow to the sea-beat shore,
Resolved with him, and with my blooming boy,
To trust the winds and waves?
Melan. Deem not, Euphrasia,
I e'er can doubt thy constancy and love.
Euph. Melanthon, how I loved! the gods, who saw
Each secret image that my fancy formed,
The gods can witness how I loved my Phocion.
And yet I went not with him. Could I do it?
Could I desert my father? Could I leave
The venerable man, who gave me being,
A victim here in Syracuse, nor stay
To watch his fate, to visit his affliction,
To cheer his prison hours, and, with the tear
Of filial virtue, bid even bondage smile?
Melan. The pious act, whate'er the fates intend,
Shall merit heart-felt praise.
Euph. Yes, Phocion, go;
Go with my child, torn from this matron breast,
This breast that still should yield its nurture to him,
Fly with my infant to some happier shore.
If he be safe, Euphrasia dies content.
Till that sad close of all, the task be mine
To tend a father with delighted care,
To smooth the pillow of declining age,
See him sink gradual into mere decay,
On the last verge of life watch every look,
Explore each fond unutterable wish,
Catch his last breath, and close his eyes in peace.
Melan. I would not add to thy afflictions; yet
My heart misgives; Evander's fatal period——

Euph. Still is far off; the gods have sent relief,
And once again I shall behold him king.
Melan. Alas! those glittering hopes but lend a ray
To gild the clouds, that hover o'er your head,
Soon to rain sorrow down, and plunge you deeper
In black despair.
Euph. The spirit-stirring virtue,
That glows within me, ne'er shall know despair.
No, I will trust the gods. Desponding man!
Hast thou not heard with what resistless ardour
Timoleon drives the tumult of the war?
Hast thou not heard him thundering at our gates?
The tyrant's pent up in his last retreat;
Anon thou'lt see his battlements in dust,
His walls, his ramparts, and his towers in ruin;
Destruction pouring in on every side;
Pride and oppression at their utmost need;
And nought to save him in his hopeless hour.
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
Melan. Ha! the fell tyrant comes—Beguile his rage,
And o'er your sorrows cast a dawn of gladness.

Enter DIONYSIUS, CALIPPUS, *Officers, &c.*

Dion. The vain, presumptuous Greek! his hopes of conquest,
Like a gay dream, are vanished into air.
Proudly elate, and flushed with easy triumph
O'er vulgar warriors, to the gates of Syracuse
He urged the war, till Dionysius' arm
Let slaughter loose, and taught his dastard train
To seek their safety by inglorious flight.
Euph. O Dionysius, if distracting fears
Alarm this throbbing bosom, you will pardon
A frail and tender sex. Should ruthless war
Roam through our streets, and riot here in blood,
Where shall the lost Euphrasia find a shelter?
In vain she'll kneel, and clasp the sacred altar.
O let me, then, in mercy, let me seek
The gloomy mansion, where my father dwells;
I die content, if in his arms I perish.
Dion. Thou lovely trembler, hush thy fears to rest.
The Greek recoils; like the impetuous surge
That dashes on the rock, there breaks and foams,
And backward rolls into the sea again.
All shall be well in Syracuse: a fleet
Appears in view, and brings the chosen sons
Of Carthage. From the hill that fronts the main,
I saw their canvass swelling with the wind,
While on the purple wave the western sun
Glanced the remains of day.
Euph. Yet till the fury
Of war subside, the wild, the horrid interval,
In safety let me sooth to dear delight
In a loved father's presence: from his sight,
For three long days, with specious feigned excuse
Your guards debarred me. Oh! while yet he lives,
Indulge a daughter's love: worn out with age,
Soon must he seal his eyes in endless night,
And with his converse charm my ear no more.
Dion. Why thus anticipate misfortune? Still
Evander mocks the injuries of time.
Calippus, thou survey the city round;
Station the centinels, that no surprise
Invade the unguarded works, while drowsy night
Weighs down the soldier's eye. Afflicted fair,
Thy couch invites thee. When the tumult's o'er,
Thou'lt see Evander with redoubled joy.
Though now, unequal to the cares of empire,
His age sequester him, yet honours high
Shall gild the evening of his various day.
Euph. For this benignity, accept my thanks.
They gush in tears, and my heart pours its tribute.
Dion. Perdiccas, ere the morn's revolving light
Unveil the face of things, do thou dispatch
A well-oared galley to Hamilcar's fleet;
At the north point of yonder promontory,
Let some selected officer instruct him
To moor his ships, and issue on the land.
Then may Timoleon tremble: vengeance, then,
Shall overwhelm his camp, pursue his bands,
With fatal havoc, to the ocean's margin,
And cast their limbs to glut the vulture's famine,
In mangled heaps, upon the naked shore.
[*Exit* DIONYSIUS.
Euph. What do I hear? Melanthon, can it be?
If Carthage comes, if her perfidious sons
List in his cause, the dawn of freedom's gone.
Melan. Woe, bitterest woe impends; thou would'st not think——
Euph. How?—Speak! unfold!
Melan. My tongue denies its office.
Euph. How is my father? Say, Melanthon—
Melan. He,—
I fear to shock thee with the tale of horror!
Perhaps he dies this moment. Since Timoleon
First formed his lines round this beleaguered city,
No nutriment has touched Evander's lips.
In the deep caverns of the rock imprisoned,
He pines in bitterest want.
Euph. To that abode
Of woe and horror, that last stage of life,
Has the fell tyrant moved him?
Melan. There sequestered,
Alas! he soon must perish.
Euph. Well, my heart,
Well do your vital drops forget to flow!
Melan. Enough his sword has reeked with public slaughter;
Now, dark insidious deeds must thin mankind.
Euph. Oh! night, that oft has heard my piercing shrieks
Disturb thy awful silence; oft has heard
Each stroke these hands, in frantic sorrow, gave,
From this sad breast resounding; now no more
I mean to vent complaints; I mean not now
With busy memory to retrace the wrongs
The tyrant heaped on our devoted race.
I bear it all; with calmest patience bear it,
Resigned and wretched, desperate and lost.
Melan. Despair, alas! is all the sad resource
Our fate allows us now.
Euph. Yet, why despair?
Is that the tribute to a father due?

Blood is his due, Melanthon; yes, the blood,
The vile, black blood, that fills the tyrant's veins,
Would graceful look upon my dagger's point.
Come, Vengeance, come! shake off this feeble sex,
Sinew my arm, and guide it to his heart.
And thou, O filial piety! that rul'st
My woman's breast, turn to vindictive rage;
Assume the port of justice; shew mankind
Tyrannic guilt had never dared in Syracuse,
Beyond the reach of virtue.

Melan. Yet beware;
Controul this frenzy that bears down your reason.
Surrounded by his guards, the tyrant mocks
Your utmost fury; moderate your zeal,
Nor let him hear these transports of the soul,
These wild upbraidings.

Euph. Shall Euphrasia's voice
Be hushed to silence, when a father dies?
Shall not the monster hear his deeds accurst?
Shall he not tremble, when a daughter comes,
Wild with her griefs, and terrible with wrongs,
Fierce in despair, all nature, in her cause,
Alarmed and roused with horror? Yes, Melanthon!
The man of blood shall hear me; yes! my voice
Shall mount aloft upon the whirlwind's wing,
Pierce yon blue vault, and at the throne of Heaven
Call down red vengeance on the murderer's head.
Melanthon, come; my wrongs will lend me force;
The weakness of my sex is gone; this arm
Feels tenfold strength; this arm shall do a deed
For heaven and earth, for men and gods, to wonder at!
This arm shall vindicate a father's cause.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A wild romantic scene amidst overhanging rocks; a cavern on one side.*

ARCAS. [*With a spear in his hand.*]

The gloom of night sits heavy on the world;
And o'er the solemn scene such stillness reigns,
As 'twere a pause of nature; on the beach
No murmuring billow breaks; the Grecian tents
Lie sunk in sleep; no gleaming fires are seen;
All Syracuse is hushed; no stir abroad,
Save ever and anon the dashing oar,
That beats the sullen wave. And hark!—Was that
The groan of anguish from Evander's cell,
Piercing the midnight gloom?—It is the sound
Of bustling prows, that cleave the briny deep.
Perhaps, at this dead hour, Hamilcar's fleet
Rides in the bay.

Enter PHILOTAS, *from the cavern.*

Phil. What ho! brave Arcas! ho!

Arc. Why thus desert thy couch?

Phil. Methought the sound
Of distant uproar chased affrighted sleep.

Arc. At intervals the oars resounding stroke
Comes echoing from the main. Save that report,
A death-like silence through the wide expanse
Broods o'er the dreary coast.

Phil. Do thou retire,
And seek repose; the duty of thy watch
Is now performed; I take thy post.

Arc. How fares
Your royal prisoner?

Phil. Arcas, shall I own
A secret weakness? My heart inward melts
To see that suffering virtue. On the earth,
The cold, damp earth, the royal victim lies;
And while pale famine drinks his vital spirit,
He welcomes death, and smiles himself to rest.
Oh! would I could relieve him! Thou withdraw;
Thy wearied nature claims repose; and now
The watch is mine.

Arc. May no alarm disturb thee. [*Exit.*

Phil. Some dread event is labouring into birth.
At close of day the sullen sky held forth
Unerring signals. With disastrous glare
The moon's full orb rose crimsoned o'er with blood;
And lo! athwart the gloom a falling star
Trails a long tract of fire!—What daring step
Sounds on the flinty rock? Stand there! what ho!
Speak, ere thou dar'st advance! Unfold thy purpose:
Who and what art thou?

Enter EUPHRASIA, *bearing a light in her hand.*

Euph. Mine no hostile step;
I bring no valour to alarm thy fears:
It is a friend approaches.

Phil. Ha! what mean
Those plaintive notes?

Euph. Here is no ambushed Greek,
No warrior to surprise thee on the watch.
An humble suppliant comes: Alas! my strength,
Exhausted, quite forsakes this weary frame.

Phil. What voice thus piercing through the gloom of night—
What art thou? what thy errand? quickly say
What wretch, with what intent, at this dead hour—
Wherefore alarm'st thou thus our peaceful watch?

Euph. Let no mistrust affright thee—Lo! a wretch,
The veriest wretch that ever groaned in anguish,
Comes here to grovel on the earth before thee,
To tell her sad, sad tale, implore thy aid—
For sure the power is thine, thou canst relieve
My bleeding heart, and soften all my woes.

Phil. Ha! sure those accents—

[*Takes the light from her.*

Euph. Deign to listen to me.
Phil. Euphrasia!——
Euph. Yes; the lost, undone Euphrasia;
Supreme in wretchedness; to the inmost sense,
Here in the quickest fibre of the heart,
Wounded, transfixed, and tortured to distraction.
Phil. Why, princess, thus anticipate the dawn?
Still sleep and silence wrap the weary world;
The stars in mid career usurp the pole;
The Grecian bands, the winds, the waves are hushed;
All things are mute around us; all but you
Rest in oblivious slumber from their cares.
Euph. Yes, all; all rest: the very murderer sleeps;
Guilt is at rest; I, only, wake to misery.
Phil. How did'st thou gain the summit of the rock?
Euph. Give me my father; here you hold him fettered;
Oh! give him to me!—in the fond pursuit
All pain and peril vanish; love and duty
Inspired the thought; despair itself gave courage;
I climbed the hard ascent; with painful toil
Surmounted craggy cliffs, and pointed rocks—
What will not misery attempt?—If ever
The touch of nature throbbed within your breast,
Admit me to Evander; in these caves
I know he pines in want; let me convey
Some charitable succour to a father!
Phil. Alas! Euphrasia, would I durst comply!
Euph. It will be virtue in thee. Thou, like me,
Wert born in Greece:—Oh! by our common parent—
Nay, stay; thou shalt not fly; Philotas, stay;
You have a father too; think, were his lot
Hard as Evander's, if by felon hands
Chained to the earth, with slow consuming pangs
He felt sharp want, and with an asking eye,
Implored relief, yet cruel men denied it,
Wouldst thou not burst through adamantine gates,
Through walls and rocks, to save him? Think, Philotas,
Of thy own aged sire, and pity mine.
Think of the agonies a daughter feels,
When thus a parent wants the common food,
The bounteous hand of nature meant for all!
Phil. 'Twere best withdraw thee, princess; thy assistance
Evander wants not; it is fruitless all;
Thy tears, thy wild entreaties, are in vain.
Euph. Ha!—thou hast murdered him; he is no more;—
I understand thee;—butchers, you have shed
The precious drops of life; yet e'en in death,
Let me behold him; let a daughter close,
With duteous hand, a father's beamless eyes;
Print her last kisses on his honoured hand,
And lay him decent in the shroud of death!
Phil. Alas! this frantic grief can naught avail.
Retire, and seek the couch of balmy sleep,
In this dread hour, this season of repose.
Euph. And dost thou, then, inhuman that thou art,
Advise a wretch, like me, to know repose?
This is my last abode: these caves, these rocks,
Shall ring for ever with Euphrasia's wrongs;
All Sicily shall hear me; yonder deep
Shall echo back an injured daughter's cause;
Here will I dwell, and rave, and shriek, and give
These scattered locks to all the passing winds;
Call on Evander lost; and, pouring curses,
And cruel gods, and cruel stars invoking,
Stand on the cliff in madness and despair!
Phil. Yet calm this violence! reflect, Euphrasia,
With what severe enforcement Dionysius
Exacts obedience to his dread command.
If here thou'rt found——
Euph. Here is Euphrasia's mansion,
[*Falls upon the ground.*
Her fixed eternal home; inhuman savages,
Here stretch me with a father's murdered corse!
Then heap your rocks, your mountains on my head!
It will be kindness in you; I shall rest
Entombed within a parent's arms.
Phil. By heaven,
My heart in pity bleeds.
Euph. Talk'st thou of pity?
Yield to the generous instinct; grant my prayer;
Let my eyes view him, gaze their last upon him,
And shew you have some sense of human woe!
Phil. Her vehemence of grief o'erpowers me quite.
My honest heart condemns the barbarous deed,
And if I dare—
Euph. And, if you dare! Is that
The voice of manhood! Honest, if you dare!
'Tis the slave's virtue! 'tis the utmost limit
Of the base coward's honour. Not a wretch,
There's not a villain, not a tool of power,
But, silence interest, extinguish fear,
And he will prove benevolent to man.
The generous heart does more: will dare do all
That honour prompts. How dost thou dare to murder?
Respect the gods, and know no other fear.
Phil. No other fear assails this warlike breast.
I pity your misfortunes; yes, by Heaven,
My heart bleeds for you. Gods! you've touched my soul!
The generous impulse is not given in vain.
I feel thee, Nature, and I dare obey.
Oh! thou hast conquered. Go, Euphrasia, go,
Behold thy father.
Euph. Raise me, raise me up;
I'll bathe thy hand with tears, thou generous man!
Phil. Yet mark my words; if aught of nourishment
Thou wouldst convey, my partners of the watch
Will ne'er consent.
Euph. I will observe your orders:
On any terms, oh! let me, let me see him!
Phil. Yon lamp will guide thee through the caverned way.
Euph. My heart runs o'er in thanks; the pious act

Timoleon shall reward; the bounteous gods,
And thy own virtue, shall reward the deed.
[*Goes into the cave.*
Phil. Prevailing, powerful virtue! Thou subduest
The stubborn heart, and mould'st it to thy purpose.
Would I could save them! But though not for me
The glorious power to shelter innocence,
Yet for a moment to assuage its woes,
Is the best sympathy, the purest joy,
Nature intended for the heart of man,
When thus she gave the social generous tear.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Inside of the Cavern.*

Enter ARCAS *and* EUPHRASIA.

Arc. No; on my life I dare not.
Euph. But a small,
A wretched pittance; one poor cordial drop,
To renovate exhausted drooping age.
I ask no more.
Arc. Not the smallest store
Of scanty nourishment must pass these walls.
Our lives were forfeit else: a moment's parley
Is all I grant; in yonder cave he lies.
Evan. [*Within the cell.*] Oh struggling nature! let thy conflict end.
Oh! give me, give me rest.
Euph. My father's voice!
It pierces here! it cleaves my very heart.
I shall expire, and never see him more.
Arc. Repose thee, princess, here; [*Draws a couch.*] here rest thy limbs,
Till the returning blood shall lend thee firmness.
Euph. The caves, the rocks, re-echo to his groans!
And is there no relief?
Arc. All I can grant
You shall command. I will unbar the dungeon,
Unloose the chain that binds him to the rock,
And leave your interview without restraint.
[*Opens a cell in the back scene.*
Euph. Hold, hold, my heart! Oh! how shall I sustain
The agonizing scene? [*Rises.*] I must behold him;
Nature, that drives me on, will lend me force.
Is that my father?
Arc. Take your last farewell.
His vigour seems not yet exhausted quite.
You must be brief, or ruin will ensue. [*Exit.*
Evan. [*Raising himself.*] Oh! when shall I get free? These lingering pangs—
Euph. Behold, ye powers, that spectacle of woe!
Evan. Dispatch me, pitying gods, and save my child!
I burn, I burn; alas! no place of rest!
[*Rises and comes out.*
A little air; once more a breath of air;
Alas! I faint—I die.
Euph. Heart-piercing sight!
Let me support you, sir.
Evan. Oh! lend your arm.
Whoe'er thou art, I thank thee: that kind breeze
Comes gently o'er my senses; lead me forward:
And is there left one charitable hand
To reach its succours to a wretch like me?
Euph. Well may'st thou ask it. Oh, my breaking heart!
The hand of death is on him.
Evan. Still a little,
A little onward to the air conduct me.
'Tis well; I thank thee; thou art kind and good,
And much I wonder at this generous pity.
Euph. Dost thou not know me, sir?
Evan. Methinks I know
That voice: art thou—alas! my eyes are dim!
Each object swims before me: No, in truth
I do not know thee.
Euph. Not your own Euphrasia?
Evan. Art thou my daughter!
Euph. Oh, my honoured sire!
Evan. My daughter, my Euphrasia? come to close
A father's eyes! Given to my last embrace!
Gods! do I hold her once again? Your mercies
Are without number. [*Falls on the couch.*
This excess of bliss
O'erpowers; it kills; Euphrasia—could I hope it?
I die content. Art thou, indeed, my daughter?
Thou art; my hand is moistened with thy tears;
I pray you do not weep; thou art my child:
I thank you, gods! in my last dying moments
You have not left me. I would pour my praise;
But, oh, your goodness overcomes me quite!
You read my heart; you see what passes there.
Euph. Alas, he faints; the gushing tide of transport
Bears down each feeble sense: restore him, Heaven!
Evan. All, my Euphrasia, all will soon be well.
Pass but a moment, and this busy globe,
Its thrones, its empires, and its bustling millions,
Will seem a speck in the great void of space.
Yet while I stay, thou darling of my age!——
——Nay, dry those tears.
Euph. I will, my father.
Evan. Where,——
I fear to ask it——where is virtuous Phocion?
Euph. Fled from the tyrant's power.
Evan. And left thee here
Exposed and helpless?
Euph. He is all truth and honour:
He fled to save my child.
Evan. My young Evander!
Your boy is safe, Euphrasia? Oh, my heart!
Alas! quite gone; worn out with misery;
Oh, weak, decayed old man!
Euph. Inhuman wretches!
Will none relieve his want! A drop of water
Might save his life, and even that's denied him!
Evan. These strong emotions—Oh! that eager air—
It is too much—assist me; bear me hence,
And lay me down in peace.
Euph. His eyes are fixed!

And those pale quivering lips! He clasps my hand:
What, no assistance! monsters, will you thus
Let him expire in these weak feeble arms?

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Those wild, those piercing shrieks will give the alarm!

Euph. Support him; bear him hence; 'tis all I ask.

Evan. [*As he is carried off.*] O death! where art thou? Death, thou dread of guilt!
Thou wish of innocence, affliction's friend,
Tired nature calls thee; come, in mercy come,
And lay me pillowed in eternal rest.
My child—where art thou? give me—reach thy hand—
Why dost thou weep? My eyes are dry—alas!
Quite parched, my lips——quite parched, they cleave together.

Euph. Now judge, ye powers, in the whole round of time,
If e'er you viewed a scene of woe like this!

[*Exeunt.*

Enter ARCAS.

Arc. The grey of morn breaks through yon eastern clouds.
'Twere time this interview should end: the hour
Now warns Euphrasia hence: what man could dare,
I have indulged—Philotas! ha! the cell
Left void! Evander gone! What may this mean?
Philotas, speak!

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Oh! vile, detested lot,
Here to obey the savage tyrant's will,
And murder virtue, that can thus behold
Its executioner, and smile upon him.
That piteous sight!

Arc. She must withdraw, Philotas;
Delay undoes us both. The restless main
Glows with the blush of day. Timoleon's fleet,
That passed the night in busy preparation,
Makes from the shore. On the high craggy point
Of yonder jutting eminence, I marked
Their haughty streamers curling to the wind.
He seeks Hamilcar's fleet. The briny deep
Shall soon be dyed with blood. The fierce alarm
Will rouse our slumbering troops. The time requires,
Without or further pause, or vain excuse,
That she depart this moment.

Phil. Arcas, yes;
My voice shall warn her of the approaching danger. [*Exit.*

Arc. Would she had ne'er adventured to our guard!
I dread the event; and hark! the wind conveys
In clearer sound the uproar of the main.
The fates prepare new havoc; on the event
Depends the fate of empire. Wherefore thus
Delays Euphrasia! Ha! what means, Philotas,
That sudden haste, that pale disordered look?

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Oh! I can hold no more; at such a sight
Even the hard heart of tyranny would melt
To infant softness. Arcas, go, behold
The pious fraud of charity and love;
Behold that unexampled goodness;
See the expedient sharp necessity has taught her;
Thy heart will burn, will melt, will yearn to view
A child like her.

Arc. Ha! Say what mystery
Wakes these emotions?

Phil. Wonder-working virtue!
The father fostered at his daughter's breast!
O, filial piety! the milk designed
For her own offspring, on the parent's lip
Allays the parching fever.

Arc. That device
Has she then formed, eluding all our care,
To minister relief!

Phil. On the bare earth
Evander lies; and as his languid powers
Imbibe with eager thirst the kind refreshment,
And his looks speak unutterable thanks,
Euphrasia views him with the tenderest glance,
Even as a mother doating on her child:
And, ever and anon, amidst the smiles
Of pure delight, of exquisite sensation,
A silent tear steals down; the tear of virtue,
That sweetens grief to rapture. All her laws
Inverted quite, great nature triumphs still.

Arc. The tale unmans my soul.

Phil. Ye tyrants, hear it!
And learn, that while your cruelty prepares
Unheard-of torture, virtue can keep pace
With your worst efforts, and can try new modes,
To bid men grow enamoured of her charms.

Arc. Philotas, for Euphrasia, in her cause,
I now can hazard all. Let us preserve
Her father for her.

Phil. Oh! her lovely daring
Transcends all praise. By Heaven he shall not die!

Arc. And yet we must be wary; I will go forth,
And first explore each avenue around,
Lest the fixed centinel obstruct our purpose.

[*Exit.*

Phil. I thank thee, Arcas; we will act like men
Who feel for others' woes—she leads him forth,
And tremblingly supports his drooping age.

[*Goes to assist him.*

Enter EUPHRASIA *and* EVANDER.

Evan. Euphrasia, oh, my child! returning life
Glows here about my heart. Conduct me forward:
At the last gasp preserved! Ha! dawning light!
Let me behold; in faith I see thee now;
I do indeed: the father sees his child!

Euph. I have relieved him—Oh! the joy's too great;

'Tis speechless rapture!
Evan. Blessings, blessings on thee!
Euph. My father still shall live. Alas! Philotas,
Could I abandon that white hoary head,
That venerable form! Abandon him
To perish here in misery and famine?
Phil. Thy tears, thou miracle of goodness!
Have triumphed o'er me; these round gushing drops
Attest your conquest. Take him, take your father;
Convey him hence; I do release him to you.
Evan. What said Philotas? Do I fondly dream?
Indeed my senses are imperfect; yet
Methought I heard him! Did he say, release me?
Phil. Thou art my king, and now no more my prisoner;
Go with your daughter, with that wondrous pattern
Of filial piety to after times.
Yes, princess, lead him forth; I'll point the path,
Whose soft declivity will guide your steps
To the deep vale, which these o'erhanging rocks
Encompass round. You may convey him thence
To some safe shelter. Yet a moment's pause;
I must conceal your flight from every eye.
Yes, I will save them—Oh, returning virtue!
How big with joy one moment in thy service!
That wretched pair! I'll perish in their cause.
[*Exit.*
Evan. Whither, oh! whither shall Evander go!
I am at the goal of life; if in the race
Honour has followed with no lingering step,
But there sits smiling with her laurelled wreath
To crown my brow, there would I fain make halt,
And not inglorious lay me down to rest.
Euph. And will you then refuse, when thus the gods
Afford a refuge to thee?
Evan. Oh! my child,
There is no refuge for me.
Euph. Pardon, sir:
Euphrasia's care has formed a safe retreat;
There may'st thou dwell; it will not long be wanted.
Soon shall Timoleon, with resistless force,
Burst yon devoted walls.
Evan. Timoleon!
Euph. Yes,
The brave Timoleon, with the power of Greece,
Another day shall make the city his.
Evan. Timoleon come to vindicate my rights!
Oh! thou shalt reign in Sicily! my child
Shall grace her father's throne. Indulgent Heaven!
Pour down your blessings on this best of daughters;
To her and Phocion give Evander's crown;
Let them, oh! let them both in virtue wear it,
And in due time transmit it to their boy!

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. All things are apt; the drowsy centinel
Lies hushed in sleep; I'll marshal thee the way
Down the steep rock.
Euph. Oh! let us quickly hence!
Evan. The blood but loiters in these frozen veins.
Do you, whose youthful spirit glows with life,
Do you go forth and leave this mouldering corpse.
To me had Heaven decreed a longer date,
It ne'er had suffered a fell monster's reign,
Nor let me see the carnage of my people.
Farewell, Euphrasia; in one loved embrace
To these remains pay the last obsequies,
And leave me here to sink to silent dust.
Euph. And will you, then, on self-destruction bent,
Reject my prayer, nor trust your fate with me?
Evan. Trust thee, Euphrasia? Trust in thee, my child?
Though life's a burden I could well lay down,
Yet I will prize it, since bestowed by thee.
Oh! thou art good; thy virtue soars a flight
For the wide world to wonder at; in thee—
Hear it all nature, future ages hear it——
The father finds a parent in his child! [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A rampart near the harbour.*

Enter MELANTHON *and* PHILOTAS.

Melan. And lives he still?
Phil. He does; and kindly aliment
Renews the spirngs of life.
Melan. And doth he know
The glorious work the destinies prepare?
Phil. He is informed of all.
Melan. That Greek Timoleon
Comes his deliverer, and the fell usurper
Pants in the last extreme?
Phil. The glorious tidings
Have reached his ear.
Melan. Lead on, propitious powers,
Your great design! second the Grecian arms,
And whelm the sons of Carthage in the deep.
Phil. This hour decides their doom; and lo! Euphrasia
Stands on the jutting rock, that rock, where oft
Whole days she sat in pensive sorrow fixed,
And swelled, with streaming tears, the restless deep.

There, now with other sentiments elate,
She views Timoleon, with victorious prow,
Glide through the waves, and sees the scattered navy
Of Carthage fly before him.
Melan. Blest event!
Evander, if thou mock'st me not, shall live
Once more to see the justice of the gods.
But wilt thou still protect my royal master
Wilt thou admit me to his wished-for presence?
Phil. Let it suffice that no assassin's aim
Can now assault him: I must hence, Melanthon;
I now must mingle with the tyrant's train,
And, with a semblance of obsequious duty,
Delude suspicion's eye: My friend, farewell.
[*Exit.*
Melan. If he deceive me not with specious hopes,
I shall behold the sovereign, in whose service
These temples felt the iron casque of war,
And these white hairs have silvered o'er my head.

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. See there; behold them; lo! the fierce encounter!
He rushes on; the ocean flames around
With the bright flash of arms; the echoing hills
Rebellow to the roar.
Melan. The gods are with us,
And victory is ours.
Euph. High on the stern
The Grecian leaders stand: they stem the surge;
Launched from their arm the missive lightnings fly,
And the Barbaric fleet is wrapt in fire.
And lo! yon bark, down in the roaring gulf;
And there, more, more are perishing—Behold!
They plunge, for ever lost.
Melan. So perish all,
Who from yon continent unfurl their sails,
To shake the freedom of this sea-girt isle!
Euph. Did I not say, Melanthon, did I not
Presage the glories of Timoleon's triumph!
Where now are Afric's sons? The vanquished tyrant
Shall look aghast; his heart shall shrink appalled,
And dread his malefactions! Worse than famine,
Despair shall fasten on him!

Enter DIONYSIUS, *&c.*

Dion. Base deserters!
Curse on their Punic faith! Did they once dare
To grapple with the Greek! Ere yet the main
Was tinged with blood, they turned their ships averse.
May storms and tempests follow in the rear,
And dash their fleet upon the Lybian shore!

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. My liege, Timoleon, where the harbour opens,
Has stormed the forts, and even now his fleet
Pursues its course, and steers athwart the bay.
Dion. Ruin impends; and yet, if fall it must,
I bear a mind to meet it, undismayed,
Unconquered even by fate.
Cal. Through every street
Despair and terror fly. A panic spreads
From man to man, and superstition sees
Jove armed with thunder, and the gods against us.
Dion. With sacred rites their wrath must be appeased.
Let instant victims at the altar bleed;
Let incense roll its fragrant clouds to heaven,
And pious virgins, and the matron train,
In slow procession to the temple bear
The image of their gods.
Euph. Ha!—Does the tyrant
Dare, with unhallowed step, with crimes and guilt,
Approach the sacred fane?—Alas! my father,
Where now thy sanctuary? What place shall hide
Thy persecuted virtue? [*Aside.*
Dion. Thou, Euphrasia,
Lead forth the pious band. This very moment
Issue our orders.
Euph. With consenting heart,
Euphrasia goes to waft her prayers to Heaven.
[*Exit.*
Dion. The solemn sacrifice, the virgin throng,
Will gain the popular belief, and kindle
In the fierce soldiery religious rage.
Away, my friends, prepare the sacred rites.
[*Exeunt* CALIPPUS, *&c.*
Philotas, thou draw near: how fares your prisoner?
Has he yet breathed his last?
Phil. Life ebbs apace;
To-morrow's sun sees him a breathless corse.
Dion. Curse on his lingering pangs! Sicilia's crown
No more shall deck his brow; and if the sand
Still loiter in the glass, thy hand, my friend,
May shake it thence.
Phil. It shall, dread sir; that task
Leave to thy faithful servant.
Dion. Oh! Philotas,
Thou little know'st the cares, the pangs of empire.
The ermined pride, the purple, that adorns
A conqueror's breast, but serves, my friend, to hide
A heart that's torn, that's mangled with remorse.
Each object round me wakens horrid doubts;
The flattering train, the centinel that guards me,
The slave that waits, all give some new alarm,
And from the means of safety dangers rise.
Even victory itself plants anguish here,
And round my laurels the fell serpent twines.
Phil. Would Dionysius abdicate his crown,
And sue for terms of peace?
Dion. Detested thought!
No, though ambition teem with countless ills,
It still has charms of power to fire the soul.
Though horrors multiply around my head,
I will oppose them all. The pomp of sacrifice,
But now ordained, is mockery to Heaven.
'Tis vain, 'tis fruitless; then let daring guilt
Be my inspirer, and consummate all.
Where are those Greeks, the captives of my sword,
Whose desperate valour rushed within our walls?

Fought near our person, and the pointed lance
Aimed at my breast?
Phil. In chains they wait their doom.
Dion. Give me to see them; bring the slaves before me.
Phil. What, ho! Melanthon! this way lead your prisoners.

Enter MELANTHON, *with* PHOCION, *disguised as a Greek Officer, and Soldiers.*

Dion. Assassins, and not warriors! do ye come,
When the wide rage of battle claims your sword,
Thus do you come against a single life
To wage the war? Did not our buckler ring
With all your darts, in one collected volley,
Showered on my head? Did not your swords at once
Point at my breast, and thirst for regal blood?
Greek Offi. We sought thy life. I am by birth a Greek.
An open foe, in arms, I meant to slay
The foe of human kind. With rival ardour
We took the field; one voice, one mind, one heart;
All leagued, all covenanted: in yon camp
Spirits there are who aim, like us, at glory.
Whene'er you sally forth, whene'er the Greeks
Shall scale your walls, prepare thee to encounter
A like assault. By me the youth of Greece
Thus notify the war they mean to wage.
Dion. Thus, then, I warn them of my great revenge.
Whoe'er in battle shall become our prisoner,
In torment meets his doom.
Greek Offi. Then wilt thou see,
How vile the body to a mind that pants
For genuine glory. Twice three hundred Greeks
Have sworn, like us, to hunt thee through the ranks;
Ours the first lot; we've failed; on yonder plain
Appear in arms, the faithful band will meet thee.
Dion. Vile slave, no more! Melanthon, drag them hence
To die in misery. Impaled alive,
The winds shall parch them on the craggy cliff.
Selected from the rest, let one depart
A messenger to Greece, to tell the fate
Her chosen sons, her first adventurers met.
[*Exit.*
Melan. Unhappy men! how shall my care protect
Your forfeit lives? Philotas, thou conduct them
To the deep dungeon's gloom. In that recess,
Midst the wild tumult of eventful war,
We may ward off the blow. My friends, farewell:
That officer will guide your steps.
[*All follow* PHILOTAS, *except* PHOCION.
Pho. Disguised
Thus in a soldier's garb, he knows me not.
Melanthon!
Melan. Ha!—Those accents!—Phocion here?
Pho. Yes, Phocion here! Speak, quickly tell me, say,
How fares Euphrasia?
Melan. Ha! beware—Philotas,
Conduct those prisoners hence; this soldier here
Shall bear the tidings to Timoleon's camp.
Pho. Oh! satisfy my doubts; how fares Euphrasia?
Melan. Euphrasia lives, and fills the anxious moments
With every virtue. Wherefore venture hither?
Why with rash valour penetrate our gates?
Pho. Could I refrain? Oh! could I tamely wait
The event of lingering war? With patience count
The lazy-pacing hours, while here in Syracuse
The tyrant keeps all that my heart holds dear?
For her dear sake, all dangers sink before me;
For her I burst the barriers of the gate,
Where the deep caverned rocks afford a passage.
A hundred chosen Greeks pursued my steps;
We forced an entrance; the devoted guard
Fell victims to our rage; but, in that moment,
Down from the walls superior numbers came.
The tyrant led them on. We rushed upon him,
If we could reach his heart, to end the war.
But Heaven thought otherwise. Melanthon, say—
I fear to ask it—lives Evander still?
Melan. Alas! he lives, imprisoned in the rock.
Thou must withdraw thee hence; regain once more
Timoleon's camp; alarm his slumbering rage;
Assail the walls; thou, with thy phalanx, seek
The subterranneous path; that way at night
The Greeks may enter, and let in destruction
To the great work of vengeance.
Pho. Would'st thou have me
Basely retreat, while my Euphrasia trembles
Here on the ridge of peril? She, perhaps,
May fall unknown, unpitied, undistinguished,
Amidst the general carnage. Shall I leave her
To add that beauty to the purple heap?
No; I will seek her in these walls accurst,
Even in the tyrant's palace; save that life,
My only source of joy; that life, whose loss
Would make all Greece complotter in a murder,
And damn a righteous cause.
Melan. Yet hear the voice
Of sober age. Should Dionysius' spies
Detect thee here, ruin involves us all:
'Twere best retire, and seek Timoleon's tents;
Tell him, dismay and terror fill the city;
Even now in Syracuse the tyrant's will
Ordains with pomp oblations to the gods.
His deadly hand still hot with recent blood,
The monster dares approach the sacred altar:
Thy voice may rouse Timoleon to the assault,
And bid him storm the works.
Pho. By heaven I will;
My breath shall wake his rage; this very night,
When sleep sits heavy on the slumbering city,
Then Greece unsheathes her sword, and great revenge
Shall stalk with death and horror o'er the ranks
Of slaughtered troops, a sacrifice to freedom!
But first let me behold Euphrasia.
Melan. Hush
Thy pent up valour: to a secret haunt

I'll guide thy steps: there dwell, and in apt time
I'll bring Euphrasia to thy longing arms.
Pho. Wilt thou?
Melan. By Heaven I will; another act
Of desperate fury might endanger all.
The tyrant's busy guards are posted round;
In silence follow; thou shalt see Euphrasia.
Pho. Oh! lead me to her; that exalted virtue
With firmer nerve shall bid me grasp the javelin,
Shall bid my sword, with more than lightning's swiftness,
Blaze in the front of war, and glut its rage
With blows repeated in the tyrant's veins.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Temple, with a Monument in the middle.*

Enter EUPHRASIA, ERIXENE, *and other Female Attendants.*

Euph. This way, my virgins, this way bend your steps.
Lo! the sad sepulchre, where, hearsed in death,
The pale remains of my dear mother lie.
There, while the victims at yon altar bleed,
And with your prayers the vaulted roof resounds,
There, let me pay the tribute of a tear,
A weeping pilgrim o'er Eudocia's ashes.
Erix. Forbear, Euphrasia, to renew your sorrows.
Euph. My tears have dried their source; then let me here
Pay this sad visit to the honoured clay
That moulders in the tomb. These secret viands
I'll burn, an offering to a parent's shade,
And sprinkle with this wine the hallowed mould.
That duty paid, I will return, my virgins.
[*She goes into the tomb.*
Erix. Look down, propitious powers! behold that virtue,
And heal the pangs that desolate her soul.

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Mourn, mourn, ye virgins; rend your scattered garments;
Some dread calamity hangs o'er our heads.
In vain the tyrant would appease with sacrifice
The impending wrath of ill-requited Heaven.
Ill omens hover o'er us: at the altar
The victim dropt, ere the divining seer
Had gored his knife. The brazen statues tremble,
And from the marble drops of blood distil.
Erix. Now, ye just gods, if vengeance you prepare,
Now find the guilty head!
Phil. Amidst the throng,
A matron labours with the inspiring god;
She stares, she raves, and, with no mortal sound,
Proclaims around—'Where, Phœbus, am I borne?
I see their glittering spears; I see them charge;
Bellona wades in blood; hat mangled body,
Deformed with wounds and weltering in its gore,
I know it well; Oh! close the dreadful scene!
Relieve me, Phœbus! I have seen too much.'
Erix. Alas! I tremble for Evander's fate.
Avert the omen, gods, and guard his life!

Enter EUPHRASIA *from the Tomb.*

Euph. Virgins, I thank you—Oh! more lightly now
My heart expands; the pious act is done,
And I have paid my tribute to a parent.
Ah! wherefore does the tyrant bend this way?
Phil. He flies the altar; leaves the unfinished rites.
No God there smiles propitious on his cause.
Fate lifts the awful balance; weighs his life,
The lives of numbers, in the trembling scale.
Euph. Despair and horror mark his haggard looks,
His wild, disordered step—He rushes forth;
Some new alarm demands him! Even now
He issues at yon portal! Lo! see there,
The suppliant crowd disperses; wild with fear,
Distraction in each look, the wretched throng
Pours through the brazen gates—Do you retire,
Retire, Philotas; let me here remain,
And give the moments of suspended fate
To pious worship and to filial love.
Phil. Alas! I fear to yield: awhile I'll leave thee,
And at the temple's entrance wait thy coming.
[*Exit.*
Euph. Now, then, Euphrasia, now thou may'st indulge
The purest ecstacy of soul. Come forth,
Thou man of woe, thou man of every virtue!

Enter EVANDER *from the Monument.*

Evan. And does the grave thus cast me up again,
With a fond father's love to view thee? Thus
To mingle rapture in a daughter's arms?
Euph. How fares my father now?
Evan. Thy aid, Euphrasia,
Has given new life. Thou, from this vital stream
Deriv'st thy being; with unheard-of duty
Thou hast repaid it to thy native source.
Euph. Sprung from Evander, if a little portion
Of all his goodness dwell within my heart,
Thou wilt not wonder.
Evan. Joy and wonder rise
In mixed emotions! Though departing hence,
After the storms of a tempestuous life,
Though I was entering the wished-for port,
Where all is peace, all bliss, and endless joy,
Yet here contented I can linger still,
To view thy goodness, and applaud thy deeds,
Thou author of my life! Did ever parent
Thus call his child before? My heart's too full
My old fond heart runs o'er; it aches with joy.
Euph. Alas, too much you over-rate you daughter;
Nature and duty called me—Oh! my father,

How didst thou bear thy long, long sufferings? How
Endure their barbarous rage?
Evan. My foes but did
To this old frame, what Nature's hand must do.
In the worst hour of pain, a voice still whispered me,
Rouse thee, Evander; self-acquitting conscience
Declares thee blameless, and the gods behold thee.
I was but going hence, by mere decay,
To that futurity which Plato taught,
Where the immortal spirit views the planets
Roll round the mighty year, and, wrapt in bliss,
Adores the ideas of the eternal mind.
Thither, oh! thither was Evander going,
But thou recall'st me; thou!
Euph. Timoleon too
Invites thee back to life.
Evan. And does he still
Urge on the siege?
Euph. His active genius comes
To scourge a guilty race. The Punic fleet,
Half lost, is swallowed by the roaring sea.
The shattered refuse seek the Libyan shore,
To bear the news of their defeat to Carthage.
Evan. These are thy wonders, Heaven! Abroad thy spirit
Moves o'er the deep, and mighty fleets are vanished.
Euph. Ha!—hark!—what noise is that? It comes this way;
Some busy footstep beats the hallowed pavement.
Oh! Sir, retire—Ye powers!—Philotas!—ha!

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. For thee, Euphrasia, Dionysius calls.
Some new suspicion goads him. At yon gate
I stopt Calippus, as with eager haste
He bent this way to seek thee.—Oh! my sovereign,
My king, my injured master, will you pardon
The wrongs I've done thee?
[*Kneels to* EVANDER.
Evan. Virtue such as thine,
From the fierce trial of tyrannic power,
Shines forth with added lustre.
Phil. Oh! forgive
My ardent zeal; there is no time to waste.
You must withdraw; trust to your faithful friends.
Pass but another day, and Dionysius
Falls from a throne usurped.
Evan. But ere he pays
The forfeit of his crimes, what streams of blood
Shall flow in torrents round! Methinks I might
Prevent this waste of nature—I'll go forth,
And to my people shew their rightful king.
Euph. Banish that thought: forbear; the rash attempt
Were fatal to our hopes; oppressed, dismayed,
The people look aghast, and, wan with fear,
None will espouse your cause.
Evan. Yes, all will dare
To act like men;—their king, I gave myself
To a whole people. I made no reserve;
My life was theirs; each drop about my heart
Pledged to the public cause; devoted to it:
That was my compact: is the subject's less?
If they are all debased, and willing slaves,
The young but breathing to grow grey in bondage,
And the old sinking to ignoble graves,
Of such a race no matter who is king.
And yet I will not think it; no! my people
Are brave and generous; I will trust their valour.
Euph. Yet stay; yet be advised.
Phil. As yet, my liege,
No plan is fixed, and no concerted measure.
The fates are busy: wait the vast event.
Trust to my truth and honour. Witness, gods,
Here, in the temple of Olympian Jove,
Philotas swears——
Evan. Forbear: the man like thee,
Who feels the best emotions of the heart,
Truth, reason, justice, honour's fine excitements,
Acts by those laws, and wants no other sanction.
Euph. Again the alarm approaches; sure destruction
To thee, to all, will follow:—hark! a sound
Comes hollow murmuring through the vaulted aisle.
It gains upon the ear. Withdraw, my father!
All's lost if thou art seen.
Phil. And, lo! Calippus
Darts with the lightning's speed across the aisle.
Evan. Thou at the senate-house convene my friends.
Melanthon, Dion, and their brave associates,
Will shew that liberty has leaders still.
Anon I'll meet them there: my child, farewell;
Thou shalt direct me now.
Euph. Too cruel fate!
The tomb is all the mansion I can give;
My mother's tomb! [EVANDER *enters the tomb.*
Phil. You must be brief; the alarm
Each moment nearer comes. In every sound
Destruction threatens. Ha! by Heaven this way
Calippus comes—Let me retard his speed. [*Exit.*
Euph. [*Coming forward.*] How my distracted heart throbs wild with fear!
What brings Calippus? wherefore? save me Heaven!

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. This sullen musing in these drear abodes
Alarms suspicion: the king knows thy plottings,
Thy rooted hatred to the state and him.
His sovereign will commands thee to repair,
This moment, to his presence.
Euph. Ha! what means
The tyrant!——I obey, [*Exit* CAL.] and, oh! ye powers,
Ye ministers of Heaven! defend my father;
Support his drooping age; and when anon
Avenging justice shakes her crimson steel,
Oh! be the grave, at least, a place of rest;
That, from his covert in the hour of peace,
Forth he may come to bless a willing people,
And be your own just image here on earth!
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter MELANTHON *and* PHILOTAS.

Mel. Away! no more; pernicious, vile dissembler!
Phil. Wherefore this frantic rage?
Melan. Thou canst not varnish,
With thy perfidious arts, a crime like this.
I climbed the rugged cliff; but, oh! thou traitor,
Where is Evander! Through each dungeon's gloom
I sought the good old king; the guilt is thine;
May vengeance wait thee for it!
Phil. Still, Melanthon,
Let prudence guide thee.
Melan. Thou hast plunged thee down
Far as the lowest depth of hell-born crimes;
Thou hast out-gone all registers of guilt;
Beyond all fable hast thou sinned, Philotas.
Phil. By Heaven thou wrong'st me: didst thou know, old man——
Melan. Could not his reverend age, could not his virtue,
His woes unnumbered, soften thee to pity?
Thou hast destroyed my king.
Phil. Yet wilt thou hear me?
Your king still lives.
Melan. Thou vile deceiver!—Lives!
But where! Away; no more. I charge thee, leave me.
Phil. We have removed him to a sure asylum.
Melan. Removed!—Thou traitor! what dark privacy——
Why move him thence? The vile assassin's stab
Has closed his days—calm, unrelenting villain!
I know it all.
Phil. By every power above,
Evander lives; in safety lives. Last night,
When in his dark embrace sleep wrapt the world,
Euphrasia came, a spectacle of woe;
Dared to approach our guard, and with her tears,
With vehemence of grief, she touched my heart.
I gave her father to her.
Melan. How, Philotas!
If thou dost not deceive me——
Phil. No, by Heaven!
By every power above—But hark! those notes
Speak Dionysius near; anon, my friend,
I'll tell thee each particular; thy king,
Mean while, is safe—but lo! the tyrant comes;
With guilt like his I must equivocate,
And teach even truth and honour to dissemble.

Enter DIONYSIUS, CALIPPUS, *&c.*

Dion. Away each vain alarm; the sun goes down,
Nor yet Timoleon issues from his fleet.
There let him linger on the wave-worn beach;
Here, the vain Greek shall find another Troy,
A more than Hector here. Though Carthage fly,
Ourself, still Dionysius here remains.
And means the Greek to treat of terms of peace?
By Heaven, this panting bosom hoped to meet
His boasted phalanx on the embattled plain.
And doth he now, on peaceful councils bent,
Dispatch his herald?—Let the slave approach.

Enter the Herald.

Dion. Now, speak thy purpose; what doth Greece impart?
Her. Timoleon, sir, whose great renown in arms
Is equalled only by the softer virtues
Of mild humanity, that sway his heart,
Sends me, his delegate, to offer terms,
On which even foes may well accord; on which
The fiercest nature, though it spurn at justice,
May sympathise with his.
Dion. Unfold thy mystery;
Thou shalt be heard.
Her. The generous leader sees,
With pity sees, the wild destructive havock
Of ruthless war; he hath surveyed around
The heaps of slain that cover yonder field,
And, touched with generous sense of human woe,
Weeps o'er his victories.
Dion. Your leader weeps!
Then, let the author of those ills thou speak'st of,
Let the ambitious factor of destruction,
Timely retreat, and close the scene of blood.
Why doth affrighted peace behold his standard
Upreared in Sicily? and wherefore here
The iron ranks of war, from which the shepherd
Retires appalled, and leaves the blasted hopes
Of half the year, while closer to her breast
The mother clasps her infant?
Her. 'Tis not mine
To plead Timoleon's cause; not mine the office
To justify the strong, the righteous motives,
That urge him to the war; the only scope
My deputation aims at, is, to fix
An interval of peace, a pause of horror,
That they, whose bodies on the naked shore
Lie weltering in their blood, from either host
May meet the last sad rites to nature due,
And decent lie in honourable graves.
Dion. Go tell your leader, his pretexts are vain.
Let him with those that live, embark for Greece,
And leave our peaceful plains; the mangled limbs
Of those he murdered, from my tender care
Shall meet due obsequies.
Her. The hero, sir,
Wages no war with those, who bravely die.
'Tis for the dead I supplicate; for them
We sue for peace: and to the living, too,
Timoleon would extend it; but the groans
Of a whole people have unsheathed his sword.
A single day will pay the funeral rites.
To-morrow's sun may see both armies meet

Without hostility, and all in honour;
You, to inter the troops, who bravely fell;
We, on our part, to give an humble sod
To those, who gained a footing on the isle,
And by their death have conquered.

Dion. Be it so;
I grant thy suit: soon as to-morrow's dawn
Illumes the world, the rage of wasting war
In vain shall thirst for blood: but mark my words;
If the next orient sun behold you here,
That hour shall see me, terrible in arms,
Deluge yon plain, and let destruction loose.
Thou know'st my last resolve, and now, farewell.
Some careful officer conduct him forth.

[*Exit Herald.*

By Heaven, the Greek hath offered to my sword
An easy prey; a sacrifice to glut
My great revenge. Calippus, let each soldier,
This night, resign his wearied limbs to rest,
That ere the dawn, with renovated strength,
On the unguarded, unsuspecting foe,
Disarmed, and bent on superstitious rites,
From every quarter we may rush undaunted,
Give the invaders to the deathful steel,
And, by one carnage, bury all in ruin.
My valiant friends, haste to your several posts,
And let this night a calm unruffled spirit
Lie hushed in sleep: away, my friends, disperse!
Philotas, waits Euphrasia, as we ordered?

Phil. She's here at hand.

Dion. Admit her to our presence.
Rage and despair, a thousand warring passions,
All rise, by turns, and piecemeal rend my heart.
Yet every means, all measures must be tried,
To sweep the Grecian spoiler from the land,
And fix the crown, unshaken, on my brow.

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. What sudden cause requires Euphrasia's presence?

Dion. Approach, fair mourner, and dispel thy fears.
Thy grief, thy tender duty to thy father
Has touched me nearly. In his lone retreat,
Respect, attendance, every lenient care
To sooth affliction, and extend his life,
Evander has commanded.

Euph. Vile dissembler!
Detested homicide! [*Aside.*]—And has thy heart
Felt for the wretched?

Dion. Urgencies of state
Abridged his liberty; but to his person
All honour hath been paid.

Euph. The righteous gods
Have marked thy ways, and will in time repay
Just retribution.

Dion. If to see your father,
If here to meet him in a fond embrace,
Will calm thy breast, and dry those beauteous tears,
A moment more shall bring him to your presence.

Euph. Ha! lead him hither! Sir, to move him now,
Aged, infirm, worn out with toil and years—
No, let me seek him rather—If soft pity
Has touched your heart, oh! send me, send me to him!

Dion. Controul this wild alarm; with prudent care
Philotas shall conduct him; here I grant
The tender interview.

Euph. Disastrous fate!
Ruin impends!—This will discover all;
I'll perish first: provoke his utmost rage. [*Aside.*
Though much I languish to behold my father,
Yet now it were not fit—the sun goes down;
Night falls apace: soon as returning day—

Dion. This night, this very hour, you both must meet.
Together, you may serve the state and me.
Thou seest the havock of wide-wasting war;
And more, full well you know, are still to bleed.
Thou may'st prevent their fate.

Euph. Oh! give the means,
And I will bless thee for it.

Dion. From a Greek,
Torments have wrung the truth. Thy husband, Phocion—

Euph. Oh! say, speak of my Phocion!

Dion. He, 'tis he
Hath kindled up this war; with treacherous arts
Inflamed the states of Greece, and now the traitor
Comes, with a foreign aid, to wrest my crown.

Euph. And does my Phocion share Timoleon's glory?

Dion. With him invests our walls, and bids rebellion
Erect her standard here.

Euph. Oh! bless him, gods!
Where'er my hero treads the paths of war,
List on his side; against the hostile javelin
Uprear his mighty buckler; to his sword
Lend the fierce whirlwind's rage, that he may come
With wreaths of triumph, and with conquest crowned,
And his Euphrasia spring with rapture to him,
Melt in his arms, and a whole nation's voice
Applaud my hero with a love like mine!

Dion. Ungrateful fair! Has not our sovereign will
On thy descendants fixed Sicilia's crown?
Have I not vowed protection to your boy?

Euph. From thee the crown! From thee! Euphrasia's children
Shall on a nobler basis found their rights;
On their own virtue, and a people's choice.

Dion. Misguided woman!

Euph. Ask of thee protection!
The father's valour shall protect his boy.

Dion. Rush not on sure destruction; ere too late,
Accept our proffered grace. The terms are these;
Instant send forth a message to your husband;
Bid him draw off his Greeks, unmoor his fleet,
And measure back his way. Full well he knows
You and your father are my hostages;
And for his treason both may answer.

Euph. Think'st thou, then,

So meanly of my Phocion?——Dost thou deem him
Poorly wound up to a mere fit of valour,
To melt away in a weak woman's tear?
Oh! thou dost little know him: know'st but little
Of his exalted soul. With generous ardour
Still will he urge the great, the glorious plan,
And gain the ever honoured, bright reward,
Which fame entwines around the patriot's brow,
And bids for ever flourish on his tomb,
For nations freed, and tyrants laid in dust.

Dion. By Heaven! this night Evander breathes his last!

Euph. Better for him to sink at once to rest,
Than linger thus beneath the gripe of famine,
In a vile dungeon, scooped, with barbarous skill,
Deep in the flinty rock; a monument
Of that fell malice, and that black suspicion,
That marked your father's reign; a dungeon drear
Prepared for innocence!—Vice lived secure,
It flourished, triumphed, grateful to his heart;
'Twas virtue only could give umbrage; then,
In that black period, to be great and good
Was a state crime; the powers of genius, then,
Were a constructive treason.

Dion. Ha! beware,
Nor with vile calumny provoke my rage.

Euph. Whate'er was laudable, whate'er was worthy,
Sunk under foul oppression; freeborn men
Were torn in private from their household gods,
Shut from the light of heaven in caverned cells,
Chained to the grunsel edge, and left to pine
In bitterness of soul; while, in the vaulted roof,
The tyrant sat, and, through a secret channel,
Collected every sound; heard each complaint
Of martyred virtue; kept a register
Of sighs and groans by cruelty extorted;
Noted the honest language of the heart;
Then on the victims wreaked his murderous rage,
For yielding to the feelings of their nature.

Dion. Obdurate woman! obstinate in ill!
Here ends all parley. Now your father's doom
Is fixed, irrevocably fixed.

Euph. Thy doom, perhaps,
May first be fixed: the doom that ever waits
The fell oppressor, from a throne usurped
Hurled headlong down. Think of thy father's fate
At Corinth, Dionysius!

Dion. Ha! this night
Evander dies; and thou, detested fair!
Thou shalt behold him, while inventive cruelty
Pursues his wearied life through every nerve.
I scorn all dull delay. This very night
Shall sate my great revenge. [*Exit.*

Euph. This night, perhaps,
Shall whelm thee down, no more to blast creation.
My father, who inhabit'st with the dead,
Now let me seek thee in the lonely tomb,
And tremble there with anxious hope and fear.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Inside of the Temple.*

Enter PHOCION *and* MELANTHON.

Pho. Each step I move, a grateful terror shakes
My frame to dissolution.

Melan. Summon all
Thy wonted firmness; in that dreary vault
A living king is numbered with the dead.
I'll take my post, near where the pillared aisle
Supports the central dome, that no alarm
Surprise you in the pious act. [*Exit.*

Pho. If here
They both are found; if, in Evander's arms,
Euphrasia meets my search, the fates atone
For all my sufferings, all afflictions past.
Yes, I will seek them—ha!—the gaping tomb
Invites my steps—Now be propitious, Heaven!
[*He enters the tomb.*

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. All hail, ye caves of horror!——In this gloom
Divine content can dwell, the heartfelt tear,
Which, as it falls, a father's trembling hand
Will catch, and wipe the sorrows from my eye.
Thou power supreme! whose all pervading mind
Guides this great frame of things; who now beheld'st me,
Who, in that cave of death, art full as perfect
As in the gorgeous palace, now, while night
Broods o'er the world, I'll to thy sacred shrine,
And supplicate thy mercies to my father.
Who's there?—Evander?—Answer—tell me—speak——

Enter PHOCION, *from the Tomb.*

Pho. What voice is that?—Melanthon!

Euph. Ha! those sounds——
Speak of Evander! tell me that he lives,
Or lost Euphrasia dies.

Pho. Heart-swelling transport!
Art thou Euphrasia? 'Tis thy Phocion, love;
Thy husband comes.

Euph. Support me! reach thy hand!

Pho. Once more I clasp her in this fond embrace!

Euph. What miracle has brought thee to me?

Pho. Love
Inspired my heart, and guided all my ways.

Euph. Oh! thou dear wanderer! But wherefore here?
Why in this place of woe? My tender little one,
Say, is he safe? oh! satisfy a mother;
Speak of my child, or I grow wild at once!
Tell me his fate, and tell me all thy own.

Pho. Your boy is safe, Euphrasia; lives to reign
In Sicily; Timoleon's generous care
Protects him in his camp; dispel thy fears;
The gods once more will give him to thy arms.

Euph. My father lives sepulchred, ere his time,
Here in Eudocia's tomb; let me conduct thee.

Pho. I came this moment thence.

Euph. And saw Evander?
Pho. Alas! I found him not.
Euph. Not found him there?
And have they, then—have the fell murderers—
Oh! [*Faints away.*
Pho. I've been too rash; revive, my love, revive!
Thy Phocion calls; the gods will guard Evander,
And save him, to reward thy matchless virtue.

Enter EVANDER *and* MELANTHON.

Evan. Lead me, Melanthon, guide my aged steps:
Where is he? Let me see him.
Pho. My Euphrasia!
Thy father lives!—Thou venerable man!
Behold—I cannot fly to thy embrace!
Euph. These agonies must end me; ah, my father!
Again I have him; gracious Powers! again
I clasp his hand, and bathe it with my tears!
Evan. Euphrasia! Phocion too! Yes, both are here;
Oh! let me thus, thus strain you to my heart.
Pho. Protected by a daughter's tender care,
By my Euphrasia saved! That sweet reflection
Exalts the bliss to rapture.
Euph. Why, my father,
Why thus adventure forth? The strong alarm
O'erwhelmed my spirits.
Evan. I went forth, my child,
When all was dark, and awful silence round,
To throw me prostrate at the altar's foot,
And crave the care of Heaven for thee and thine.
Melanthon there——

Enter PHILOTAS.

Euph. Philotas! ha! what means——
Phil. Inevitable ruin hovers o'er you!
The tyrant's fury mounts into a blaze;
Unsated yet with blood, he calls aloud
For thee, Evander; thee his rage hath ordered
This moment to his presence.
Evan. Lead me to him:
His presence hath no terror for Evander.
Euph. Horror! it must not be.
Phil. No; never, never!
I'll perish rather. But the time demands
Our utmost vigour; with the lightning's speed
Decisive, rapid. With the scorpion stings
Of conscience lashed, despair and horror seize him,
And guilt but serves to goad his tortured mind
To blacker crimes. His policy has granted
A day's suspense from arms; yet even now
His troops prepare, in the dead midnight hour,
With base surprise, to storm Timoleon's camp.
Evan. And doth he grant a false, insidious truce,
To turn the hour of peace to blood and horror?
Euph. I know the monster well: when specious seeming
Becalms his looks, the rankling heart within
Teems with destruction. Like our mount Ætna,
When the deep snows invest his hoary head,
And a whole winter gathers on his brow,
Looking tranquillity; even then, beneath,
The fuelled entrails summon all their rage,
Till the affrighted shepherd round him sees
The sudden ruin, the volcano's burst,
Mountains hurled up in air, and molten rocks,
And all the land with desolation covered.
Melan. Now, Phocion, now, on thee our hope depends.
Fly to Timoleon; I can grant a passport;
Rouse him to vengeance; on the tyrant turn
His own insidious arts, or all is lost.
Pho. Evander, thou, and thou, my best Euphrasia,
Both shall attend my flight.
Melan. It were in vain;
The attempt would hazard all.
Euph. Together, here,
We will remain, safe in the cave of death;
And wait our freedom from thy conquering arm.
Evan. Oh! would the gods roll back the stream of time,
And give this arm the sinew that it boasted
At Tauromenium, when its force resistless
Mowed down the ranks of war; I then might guide
The battle's rage, and, ere Evander die,
Add still another laurel to my brow.
Euph. Enough of laurelled victory your sword
Hath reaped in earlier days.
Evan. And shall my sword,
When the great cause of liberty invites,
Remain inactive, unperforming quite?
Youth, second youth rekindles in my veins:
Though worn with age, this arm will know its office;
Will shew that victory has not forgot
Acquaintance with this hand. And yet—O shame!
It will not be: the momentary blaze
Sinks, and expires: I have survived it all;
Survived my reign, my people, and myself.
Euph. Fly, Phocion, fly; Melanthon will conduct thee.
Melan. And when the assault begins, my faithful cohorts
Shall form their ranks around this sacred dome
Pho. And my poor captive friends, my brave companions
Taken in battle, wilt thou guard their lives?
Melan. Trust to my care: no danger shall assail them.
Pho. By Heaven, the glorious expectation swells
This panting bosom! Yes, Euphrasia, yes;
Awhile I leave you to the care of Heaven.
Fell Dionysius, tremble! ere the dawn
Timoleon thunders at your gates; the rage,
The pent-up rage of twenty thousand Greeks,
Shall burst at once, and the tumultuous roar
Alarm the astonished world. The brazen gates
Asunder shall be rent; the towers, the ramparts,
Shall yield to Grecian valour; death and rage
Through the wide city's round shall wade in gore,
And guilty men awake to gasp their last.
Melanthon, come.
Evan. Yet, ere thou go'st, young man,
Attend my words: though guilt may oft provoke,

As now it does, just vengeance on its head,
In mercy punish it. The rage of slaughter
Can add no trophy to the victor's triumph;
Bid him not shed unnecessary blood.
Conquest is proud, inexorable, fierce;
It is humanity ennobles all.
So thinks Evander, and so tell Timoleon.
Pho. Farewell; the midnight hour shall give you freedom.
[*Exit with* MELAN. *and* PHIL.

Euph. Ye guardian deities, watch all his ways!
Evan. Come, my Euphrasia, in this interval
Together we will seek the sacred altar,
And thank the god, whose presence fills the dome,
For the best gift his bounty could bestow,
The virtue he has given thee; there we will pour
Our hearts in praise, in tears of adoration,
For all the wond'rous goodness lavished on us.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter DIONYSIUS *and* CALIPPUS.

Dion. Ere the day closed, while yet the busy eye
Might view their camps, their stations, and their guards,
Their preparations for approaching night,
Didst thou then mark the motions of the Greeks?
Cal. From the watch-tower I saw them: all things spoke
A foe secure, and discipline relaxed.
Their arms thrown idly by, the soldiers strayed
To one another's tents; their steeds no more
Stood near at hand caparisoned for war;
And from the lines numbers poured out, to see
The spot where the besieged had sallied forth,
And the fierce battle raged; to view the slain,
That lie in heaps upon the crimson beach.
There the fond brother, the afflicted father,
And the friend, sought some vestige of the face
Of him who died in battle; night came on;
Some slowly gained their tents: dispersed around,
Whole parties loitered, touched with deep regret;
War, and its train of duties, all forgot.
Dion. Their folly gives them to my sword; are all
My orders issued?
Cal. All.
Dion. The troops retired,
To gain recruited vigour from repose?
Cal. The city round lies hushed in sleep.
Dion. Anon
Let each brave officer, of chosen valour,
Forsake his couch, and with deliberate spirit,
Meet at the citadel. An hour at farthest
Before the dawn, 'tis fixed to storm their camp;
And whelm their men, their arms, and steeds, and tents,
In one prodigious ruin. Haste, Calippus,
Fly to thy post, and bid Euphrasia enter.
[*Exit* CAL.
Evander dies this night: Euphrasia, too,
Shall be disposed of. Curse on Phocion's fraud,
That from my power withdrew their infant boy.
In him the seeds of future kings were crushed,
And the whole hated line at once extinguished.

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Dion. Once more approach, and hear me; 'tis not now
A time to waste in the vain war of words.
A crisis big with horror is at hand.
I meant to spare the stream of blood, that soon
Shall deluge yonder plains. My fair proposals
Thy haughty spirit has with scorn rejected.
And now, by Heaven, here, in thy very sight,
Evander breathes his last.
Euph. The truce you have granted,
Suspends the rage of war: mean time, send forth
The orators of peace with olive crowned.
Timoleon, good and just, and ever willing
To conquer rather by persuasive truth,
Than by devouring slaughter, will agree
In friendly parley to assert his rights,
And compromise the war.
Dion. And must I sue
For terms of peace? To an invader sue?
Since you, the fiend of Syracuse and Greece,
Since you thus urge me on to desperate daring,
Your father first—of him I'll be assured—
Your father meets his fate.
Euph. If yet there's wanting
A crime to fill the measure of thy guilt,
Add that black murder to the dreadful list;
With that complete the horrors of thy reign.
Dion. Woman, beware: Philotas is at hand,
And to our presence leads Evander. All
Thy dark complottings, and thy treacherous arts,
Have proved abortive.
Euph. Ha! What new event?
And is Philotas false? Has he betrayed him?
[*Aside.*
Dion. Evander's doom is sealed—What, ho! Philotas;
Now shalt thou see him die in pangs before thee.

Enter PHILOTAS.

Euph. How my heart sinks within me!
Dion. Where's your prisoner?
Phil. Evander is no more.
Dion. Ha! death has robbed me
Of half my great revenge.
Phil. Worn out with anguish,
I saw life ebb apace. With studied art,
We gave each cordial drop, alas! in vain;

He heaved a sigh; invoked his daughter's name,
Smiled, and expired.
Dion. Bring me his hoary head.
Phil. You'll pardon, sir, my over-hasty zeal.
I gave the body to the foaming surge,
Down the steep rock, despised.
Dion. Now rave and shriek,
And rend your scattered hair. No more Evander
Shall sway Sicilia's sceptre.
Euph. Mighty gods!
The hardened heart, the man elate with pride,
View with compassion! To the bad extend
Some portion of your mercy; crimes and blood
Have made their souls a seat of desolation,
Of woe, despair, and horror! Turn to them
An eye of pity: whom your bounty formed
To truth, to goodness, and to generous deeds,
On them no more from your bright stores of bliss
You need dispense: their virtue will support them.
Dion. Now, then, thou feel'st my vengeance.
Euph. Glory in it;
Exult and triumph. The worst shaft is sped.
Yet still the unconquered mind with scorn can view thee;
With the calm sunshine of the breast can see
Thy power unequal to subdue the soul,
Which virtue formed, and which the gods protect.
Dion. Philotas, bear her hence; she shall not live.
This moment bear her hence; you know the rest.
Go, see our will obeyed; that done, with all
A warrior's speed, attend me at the citadel;
There meet the heroes, whom this night shall lead
To freedom, victory, to glorious havoc,
And the destruction of the Grecian name. [*Exit.*
Euph. Accept my thanks, Philotas; generous man!
These tears attest the emotions of my heart.
But oh! should Greece defer——
Phil. Dispel thy fears;
Phocion will bring relief; or should the tyrant
Assault their camp, he'll meet a marshalled foe.
Let me conduct thee to the silent tomb.
Euph. Ah! there Evander, naked and disarmed,
Defenceless quite, may meet some ruffian stroke.
Phil. Lo! here's a weapon: bear this dagger to him.
In the drear monument should hostile steps
Dare to approach him, they must enter singly;
This guards the passage; man by man they die,
There may'st thou dwell amidst the wild commotion;
Euph. Ye pitying gods, protect my father there! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Citadel.*

CALIPPUS *and several Officers.*

1*st Offi.* What new event thus summons us together?
Cal. 'Tis great occasion calls; Timoleon's ardour
Comes rushing on; his works rise high in air,
Advance each day, and tower above our walls.
One brave exploit may free us—Lo! the king.

Enter DIONYSIUS.

Dion. Ye brave associates, who so oft have shared
Our toil and danger in the field of glory,
My fellow-warriors, what no god could promise,
Fortune hath given us. In his dark embrace
Lo! sleep envelops the whole Grecian camp.
Against a foe, the outcasts of their country,
Freebooters roving in pursuit of prey,
Success by war, or covert stratagem,
Alike is glorious. Then, my gallant friends,
What need of words? The generous call of freedom,
Your wives, your children, your invaded rights,
All that can steel the patriot breast with valour,
Expands and rouses in the swelling heart.
Follow the impulsive ardour! follow me,
Your king, your leader; in the friendly gloom
Of night assault their camp; your country's love,
And fame eternal, shall attend the men,
Who marched through blood and horror, to redeem,
From the invader's power, their native land.
Cal. Lead to the onset; Greece shall find we bear
Hearts prodigal of blood, when honour calls,
Resolved to conquer or to die in freedom.
Dion. Thus I've resolved: when the declining moon
Hath veiled her orb, our silent march begins.
The order thus:—Calippus, thou lead forth
Iberia's sons, with the Numidian bands,
And line the shore. Perdiccas, be it thine
To march thy cohorts to the mountain's foot,
Where the wood skirts the valley: there make halt,
Till brave Amyntor stretch along the vale.
Ourself, with the embodied cavalry
Clad in their mailed cuirass, will circle round
To where their camp extends its furthest line;
Unnumbered torches there shall blaze, at once,
The signal of the charge; then, oh! my friends,
On every side let the wild uproar loose;
Bid massacre and carnage stalk around,
Unsparing, unrelenting; drench your swords
In hostile blood, and riot in destruction.

Enter an Officer.

Ha! speak; unfold thy purpose.
Offi. Instant arm;
To arms, my liege; the foe breaks in upon us;
The subterraneous path is theirs; that way
Their band invades the city, sunk in sleep.
Dion. Treason's at work; detested, treacherous villains!
Is this their promised truce? Away, my friends,
Rouse all the war; fly to your several posts,
And instant bring all Syracuse in arms.
[*Exeunt.—Warlike music.*

Enter MELANTHON.

Cal. Melanthon, now collect your faithful bands.
Melan. Do thou pursue the king; attend his steps!
Timoleon lords it in the captive city.
[*Exit* CAL.

Enter PHILOTAS.

Melan. Philotas, vengeance has begun its work.
Phil. The gods have sent relief; dismay, and terror,
And wild amaze, and death in every shape,
Fill the affrighted city.
Melan. Tyrant, now
The inevitable hour of fate is come.
Philotas, round the dome that holds Evander
We will arrange our men; there fix our post,
And guard that spot, till, like some god, Timoleon
Still the wild uproar, and bid slaughter cease.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter DIONYSIUS.

Dion. Why sleep the coward slaves! All things conspire;
The gods are leagued; I see them raze my towers,
My walls and bulwarks fall; and Neptune's trident
From its foundation heaves the solid rock.
Pallas directs the storm; her gorgon shield
Glares in my view, and from the fleet she calls
Her Greeks enraged. In arms I'll meet them all.
What, ho! my guards; arise, or wake no more.

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. This way, my liege; our friends, a valiant band,
Assemble here.
Dion. Give me to meet the Greek!
Our only safety lies in brave despair. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Inside of the Temple. A Monument in the Middle.*

Enter EUPHRASIA, ERIXENE, *and Female Attendants.*

Euph. Which way, Erixene, which way, my virgins,
Shall we direct our steps? What sacred altar
Clasp on our knees?
Erix. Alas! the horrid tumult
Spreads the destruction wide. On every side
The victor's shouts, the groans of murdered wretches,
In wild confusion rise. Once more descend
Eudocia's tomb; there thou may'st find a shelter.
Euph. Anon, Erixene, I mean to visit,
Perhaps, for the last time, a mother's urn.
This dagger there, this instrument of death,
Should fortune prosper the fell tyrant's arms,
This dagger, then, may free me from his power,
And that drear vault intomb us all in peace.
[*Puts up the dagger.*
Hark! how the uproar swells! Alas! what numbers
In Dionysius' cause shall yield their throats
To the destructive sword! Aloft I climbed
The temple's vaulted roof; the scene beneath
Is horrible to sight; the domes and palaces
Blaze to the sky; and where the flames forbear,
The Greeks, enraged, brandish the gleaming sword.
From the high roofs, to shun the raging fire,
Wretches precipitate their fall. But, oh!
No pause, no mercy; to the edge of the sword
They give their bodies; butchered, gashed with wounds,
They die in mangled heaps, and, with their limbs,
Cover the sanguine pavement.
Erix. Hark!
Euph. The din
Of arms with clearer sound advances. Hark!
That sudden burst! Again! They rush upon us!
The portal opens; lo! see there; behold!
War, horrid war invades the sacred fane;
No altar gives a sanctuary now. [*Warlike music.*

Enter DIONYSIUS *and* CALIPPUS, *with several Soldiers.*

Dion. Here will I mock their siege; here stand at bay,
And brave them to the last.
Cal. Our weary foes
Desist from the pursuit.
Dion. Though all betray me,
Though every god conspire, I will not yield.
If I must fall, the temple's ponderous roof,
The mansion of the gods combined against me,
Shall first be crushed, and lie in ruin with me,
Euphrasia here! Detested, treacherous woman!
For my revenge preserved! By Heaven 'tis well;
Vengeance awaits thy guilt, and this good sword
Thus sends thee to atone the bleeding victims,
This night has massacred.
Cal. [*Holding* DIONYSIUS'S *arm.*] My liege, forbear;
Her life preserved may plead your cause with Greece,
And mitigate your fate.
Dion. Presumptuous slave!
My rage is up in arms; by Heaven she dies!

Enter EVANDER *from the Tomb.*

Evan. Horror! forbear! Thou murderer, hold thy hand!
The gods behold thee, horrible assassin!
Restrain the blow; it were a stab to Heaven;
All nature shudders at it! Will no friend
Arm, in a cause like this, a father's hand?
Strike at this bosom rather. Lo! Evander
Prostrate and grovelling on the earth before thee;
He begs to die; exhaust the scanty drops
That lag about his heart; but spare my child!
Dion. Evander!—Do my eyes once more behold him!
May the fiends seize Philotas! Treacherous slave!

'Tis well thou liv'st; thy death were poor revenge
From any hand but mine. [*Offers to strike.*
Euph. No, tyrant, no;
[*Rushing before* EVAN.
I have provoked your vengeance; through this bosom
Open a passage; first on me, on me
Exhaust your fury; every power above
Commands thee to respect that aged head:
His withered frame wants blood to glut thy rage;
Strike here; these veins are full; here's blood enough;
The purple tide will gush to glad thy sight.
Dion. Amazement blasts and freezes every power!
They shall not live. Ha! the fierce tide of war
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
This way comes rushing on.
[*Goes to the top of the stage.*
Euph. [*Embracing* EVAN.] Oh! thus, my father,
We'll perish thus together.
Dion. Bar the gates;
Close every passage, and repel their force.
Evan. And must I see thee bleed? Oh! for a sword!
Bring, bring me daggers!
Dion. [*Advancing.*] Guards, seize the slave,
And give him to my rage.
Evan. [*Seized by the guards.*] Oh! spare her, spare her!
Inhuman villains!
Euph. Now, one glorious effort!
Dion. Let me dispatch; thou traitor, thus my arm——
Euph. A daughter's arm, fell monster, strikes the blow. [*Stabs him.*
Yes, first she strikes; an injured daughter's arm
Sends thee devoted to the infernal gods.
[*He falls.*
Dion. Detested fiend! Thus by a woman's hand!
Euph. Yes, tyrant, yes; in a dear father's cause,
A woman's vengeance towers above her sex.
Dion. May curses blast thy arm! May Ætna's fires
Convulse the land; to its foundation shake
The groaning isle! May civil discord bear
Her flaming brand through all the realms of Greece;
And the whole race expire in pangs like mine!
[*Dies.*
Euph. Behold, all Sicily, behold! The point
Glows with the tyrant's blood. Ye slaves, [*To the guards.*] look there!
Kneel to your rightful king: the blow for freedom
Gives you the rights of men! and oh! my father,
My ever honoured sire, it gives thee life.
Evan. My child! my daughter! saved again by thee! [*Embraces her.*

A flourish of Trumpets.—Enter PHOCION, MELANTHON, PHILOTAS, *&c.*

Pho. Now, let the monster yield. My best Euphrasia!
Euph. My lord! my Phocion! welcome to my heart.
Lo! there the wonders of Euphrasia's arm!
Pho. And is the proud one fallen! The dawn shall see him
A spectacle for public view. Euphrasia!
Evander too! Thus to behold you both——
Evan. To her direct thy looks; there fix thy praise,
And gaze with wonder there. The life I gave her,
Oh, she has used it for the noblest ends!
To fill each duty; make her father feel
The purest joy, the heart-dissolving bliss
To have a grateful child. But has the rage
Of slaughter ceased?
Pho. It has.
Evan. Where is Timoleon?
Pho. He guards the citadel; there gives his orders
To calm the uproar, and recall from carnage
His conquering troops.
Euph. Oh! once again, my father,
Thy sway shall bless the land. Not for himself
Timoleon conquers; to redress the wrongs
Of bleeding Sicily the hero comes.
Thee, good Melanthon, thee, thou generous man,
His justice shall reward. Thee, too, Philotas,
Whose sympathizing heart could feel the touch
Of soft humanity, the hero's bounty,
His brightest honours, shall be lavished on thee.
Evander, too, will place thee near his throne;
And shew mankind, even on this shore of being,
That virtue still shall meet its sure reward.
Phil. I am rewarded: feelings such as mine
Are worth all dignities; my heart repays me.
Evan. Come, let us seek Timoleon; to his care
I will commend ye both: for now, alas!
Thrones and dominions now no more for me.
To thee I give my crown: yes, thou Euphrasia,
Shall reign in Sicily. And oh! ye powers,
In that bright eminence of care and peril,
Watch over all her ways; conduct and guide
The goodness you inspired; that she may prove,
If e'er distress like mine invade the land,
A parent to her people; stretch the ray
Of filial piety to times unborn,
That men may hear her unexampled virtue,
And learn to emulate THE GRECIAN DAUGHTER!
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

BY GARRICK.

THE Grecian Daughter's compliments to all;
Begs that for Epilogue you will not call;
For leering, giggling would be out of season,
But hopes, by me, you'll hear a little reason.
A father rais'd from death! a nation sav'd!
A tyrant's crimes by female spirit brav'd!
The tyrant stabb'd, and by her nerveless arm,
With virtue's spell surrounding guards could charm!
Can she, this sacred tumult in her breast,
Turn Father, Freedom, Virtue, all to jest?
Wake you, ye fair ones, from your sweet repose,
As wanton zephyrs wake the sleeping rose?
Dispel these clouds which o'er your eye-lids crept,
Which our wise bard mistook, and swore you wept?
Shall she to macaronies life restore,
Who yawn'd half dead, and curs'd the tragic *Bore?*
Dismiss 'em smirking to their nightly haunt,
Where dice and cards their moon-struck minds enchant?
Some, muffled like the witches in Macbeth,
Brood o'er the magic circle, pale as death!
Others the cauldron go about—about!
And Ruin enters as the Fates go out.
Bubble, bubble,
Toil and trouble,
Passions burn,
And bets are double!
Double, double!
Toil and trouble,
Passions burn,
And all is bubble.
But jest apart, (for scandal forms these tales,)
Falsehoods be mute; let Justice hold the scales.
Britons were ne'er enslav'd by evil pow'rs:
To peace and wedded love they give the midnight hours.
From slumbers pure no rattling dice can wake 'em:
Who make the laws, were never known to break 'em.
'Tis false, ye fair, whatever spleen may say,
That you down folly's tide are borne away.
You never wish at deep distress to sneer;
For eyes, tho' bright, are brighter thro' a tear.
Should it e'er be the nation's wretched fate,
To laugh at all that's good and wise and great:
Let Genius rouse, the friend of human kind,
To break those spells which charm, and sink the mind:
Let Comedy, with pointed ridicule,
Pierce to the quick each knave and vicious fool:
Let Tragedy—a warning to the times,
Lift high her dagger at exalted crimes;
Drive from the heart each base, unmanly passion,
Till Virtue triumph in despite of Fashion.

THE

EARL OF WARWICK.

BY

FRANKLIN.

PROLOGUE.

BY COLMAN.

SEVERE each poet's lot; but sure most hard
Is the condition of the play-house bard:
Doom'd to hear all that would-be critics talk,
And in the go-cart of dull rules to walk!
'Yet authors multiply,' you say. 'Tis true,
But what a numerous crop of critics too!
Scholars alone of old durst judge and write:
But now each journalist turns Stagyrite;
Quintilians in each coffee-house you meet,
And many a Longinus walks the street.
In Shakspeare's days, when his advent'rous muse,
A muse of fire! durst each bold licence use,
Her noble ardour met no critic's phlegm,
To check wild fancy, or her flights condemn:
Ariels and Calibans, unblam'd, she drew,
Or goblins, ghosts, and witches brought to view.
If to historic truth she shap'd her verse,
A nation's annals freely she'd rehearse;
Bring Rome's or England's story on the stage,
And run, in three short hours, thro' half an age.
Our bard, all terror-struck, and fill'd with dread,
In Shakspeare's awful footsteps does not tread;
Thro' the wild field of hist'ry fears to stray,
And builds upon one narrow spot his play;
Steps not from realm to realm, whole seas between,
But barely changes twice or thrice his scene:
While Shakspeare vaults on the poetic wire,
And pleas'd spectators fearfully admire,
Our bard, a critic pole between his hands,
On the tight rope, scarce balanc'd, trembling stands;
Slowly and cautiously his way he makes,
And fears to fall at every step he takes.
While then fierce Warwick he before you brings,
That setter-up and puller-down of kings,
With British candour dissipate his fear!
An English story fits an English ear.
Tho' hoarse and crude you deem his first essay,
A second may your favours well repay:
Applause may nerve his verse and cheer his heart,
And teach the practice of this dangerous art.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

King EDWARD, *attached to Lady E. Gray.*
Earl of WARWICK, *her Lover.*
Earl of PEMBROKE, *Friend to Warwick.*
Earl of SUFFOLK, *his Enemy.*

WOMEN.

MARGARET *of* ANJOU, *the deposed Queen.*
Lady ELIZABETH GRAY, *attached to Warwick.*
Lady CLIFFORD, *Confidante of Margaret.*
Officers, Attendants, Guards, &c.

SCENE,—*The Palace.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Palace.*

Enter MARGARET *of* ANJOU, *and Lady* CLIFFORD.

Clif. THANKS, gracious Heaven! my royal mistress smiles,
Unusual gladness sparkles in her eye,
And bids me welcome in the stranger, Joy,
To his new mansion.
Marg. Yes, my faithful Clifford,
Fortune is weary of oppressing me:
Through my dark cloud of grief a cheerful ray
Of light breaks forth, and gilds the whole horizon.
Clif. Henry in chains, and Edward on the throne
Of Lancaster; thyself a prisoner here;
Thy captive son torn from his mother's arms,
And in the tyrant's power; a kingdom lost:
Amidst so many sorrows, what new hope
Hath wrought this wondrous change?
Marg. That, which alone,
In sorrow's bitterest hour, can minister
Sweet comfort to the daughters of affliction,
And bid misfortune smile—the hope of vengeance:
Vengeance! benignant patron of distress,
Thee I have oft invoked, propitious now
Thou smil'st upon me; if I do not grasp
The glorious opportunity, henceforth
Indignant frown, and leave me to my fate!
Clif. Unhappy princess! that deceiver, Hope,
Hath often flattered, and as oft betrayed thee;
What hast thou gained by all its promises?
What's the reward of all thy toils?
Marg. Experience——
Yes, Clifford, I have read the instructive volume
Of human nature, there long since have learned,
The way to conquer men is by their passions;
Catch but the ruling foible of their hearts,
And all their boasted virtues shrink before you.
Edward and Warwick, those detested names,
Too well thou know'st, united to destroy me.
Clif. That was, indeed, a fatal league.
Marg. But mark me;
If we could break this adamantine chain,
We might again be free: this mighty warrior,
This dread of kings, the unconquerable Warwick,
Is plighted to the fair Elizabeth.
Clif. The lady Gray, you mean, the beauteous widow,
Whose husband fell in arms for Lancaster?
Marg. The same, my Clifford—Warwick long has loved——
Clif. And means to wed her
Marg. But if I have art,
Or she ambition, that shall never be.
Clif. Canst thou prevent it?
Marg. Yes, my Clifford; Warwick
Were a mean choice for such transcendent beauty;
I shall provide her with a fitter husband,
A nobler far, and worthier of her charms—
Young Edward——
Clif. Ha! the king! impossible!
Warwick, even now, commissioned by the state
To treat with Lewis, offers England's throne
To France's daughter; and, ere this, perhaps,
Hath signed the solemn contract.
Marg. Solemn trifles!
Mere cobweb ties—Love's a despotic tyrant,
And laughs, like other kings, at public faith,
When it opposes private happiness:
Edward is youthful, gay, and amorous;
His soul is ever open to the lure
Of beauty; and Elizabeth hath charms
Might shake a hermit's virtue.
Clif. Hath he seen
This peerless fair one?
Marg. Yes—by my contrivance,
When last he hunted in the forest, some,
Whom I had planted there, as if by chance
Alone directed, led him cross the lawn
To Grafton. There, even as my soul had wished,
The dazzling lustre of her charms surprised
His unsuspecting heart——
Clif. What followed?
Marg. Oh!
He gazed and wondered; for awhile his pride
Indignant rose, and struggled with his passion,
But love was soon victorious: and last night,
The earl of Suffolk—so my trusty spies
Inform me—was dispatched, on wings of love,
To plead his master's cause, and offer her
The throne of England.
Clif. What if she refuse
The golden bribe?
Marg. No matter; all I wish
Is but to make them foes: the generous Warwick
Is fiery, and impatient of reproof;
He will not brook a rival in his love,
Though seated on a throne; besides, thou know'st,
The haughty earl looks down with scorn on Edward,
As the mere work of his all-powerful hand,
The baby monarch of his own creation.
Clif. Believe me, madam, Edward still reveres
And loves him; still, as conscious of the debt,
Pays him with trust and confidence; their souls
Are linked together in the strictest bonds
Of sacred friendship.
Marg. That but serves my cause:
Where ties are close, and interests united,
The slightest injuries are severely felt;
Offended friendship never can forgive.
Clif. Now the full prospect opens to my view;
I see thy distant aim, and trace the paths
Of vengeance: England soon will be a scene

Of blood and horror; discord's fatal torch
Once lit up in this devoted land,
What power shall e'er extinguish it? Alas!
I tremble at the consequence.
Marg. And I
Enjoy it:—Oh! 'twill be a noble contest
Of pride 'gainst pride, oppression 'gainst oppression;
Rise but the storm, and let the waves beat high,
The wreck may be our own: in the warm struggle,
Who knows but one or both of them may fall,
And Margaret rise triumphant on their ruin!
It must be so; and see the king approaches:
This way he passes from the council—Mark
His downcast eye! he is a stricken deer,
The arrow's in his side—he cannot 'scape:
We'll meet and speak to him.
Clif. What mean you, madam?
Marg. To ask him—what, I know, he will refuse;
That gives me fair pretext to break with him,
And join the man I hate, vindictive Warwick.
But soft, he comes——

Enter King EDWARD, *and an Officer.*

Edw. Is Suffolk yet returned? [*To an Officer.*
Offi. No, my good liege.
Edw. Go, wait and bring him to me.
[*Exit Offi.*
I'll to my closet. Pardon me, fair lady,
I saw you not.
Marg. Perhaps it is beneath
A conqueror to look down upon his slave;
But I've a boon to ask.
Edw. Whate'er it is,
Within the limits of fair courtesy,
Which honour can bestow, I'll not refuse thee.
Marg. There was a time, when Margaret of Anjou
Would not have deigned to ask of Edward aught;
Nor was there aught, which Edward dared refuse her;
But that is past, great Warwick's arm prevailed,
And I am now your prisoner.
Edw. Since the hour,
When fortune shone propitious on the cause
Of justice, and gave victory to our arms,
You have been treated with all due respect,
Served like a queen, and lodged within our palace:
Is there aught more, you can, with reason, ask,
Or I, in prudence, grant you?
Marg. Give me back
The liberty I lost—restore my son,
And I may then, perhaps, be reconciled
To an usurper, may withhold my vengeance,
And let thee sit unpunished on—my throne.
Edw. You ask too proudly, madam; but to shew you
I cannot fear, you have your liberty.
Letters this morning I received from France,
Have offered noble ransom for your person;
Without that ransom—for the soul of Edward
Is far above the sordid lust of gold,
I grant it—from this moment you are free;
But for your son, I cannot part with him.
Marg. I scorn your bounties, scorn your proffered freedom.
What's liberty to me without my child?
But fate will place us soon above thy reach:
Thy short-lived tyranny is almost past,
The storm is gathering round thee, and will burst
With tenfold vengeance on thy guilty head.
Edw. I am not to be talked into submission,
Nor dread the menace of a clamorous woman.
Marg. Thou may'st have cause to dread a woman's power.
The time may come—mark my prophetic word—
When wayward beauty shall repay with scorn
Thy fruitless vows, and vindicate my wrongs:
The friend thou lean'st on, like a broken reed,
Shall pierce thy side, and fill thy soul with anguish,
Keen as the pangs I feel: York's perjured house
Shall sink to rise no more, and Lancaster
With added lustre reassume the throne.
Hear this and tremble—give me back my son—
Or dread the vengeance of a desperate mother.
[*Exit* MARGARET.
Edw. Imperious woman! but the voice of woe
Is ever clamorous: 'tis the privilege,
The charter of affliction to complain.
This tardy Suffolk! how I long to know,
Yet dread to hear my fate! Elizabeth,
On thee the colour of my future life
Depends, for thou alone canst make me blest,
Or cursed for ever! O! this cruel doubt
Is worse than all my tortures: but he comes,
The ambassador of love.

Enter the Earl of SUFFOLK.

What news, my Suffolk?
Shall I be happy? O! I'm on the rack
Of expectation! Didst thou tell my tale
As if it were thy own, and may I hope—
Suf. My royal liege——
Edw. Good Suffolk, lay aside
The forms of dull respect; be brief, and tell me,
Speak, hast thou seen her? Will she be my queen?
Quick, tell me every circumstance, each word,
Each look, each gesture: didst thou mark them, Suffolk?
Suf. I did, and will recount it all: last night,
By your command, in secret I repaired
To Grafton's tufted bower, the happy seat
Of innocence and beauty; there I found
Thy soul's best hope, the fair Elizabeth;
Ne'er did these eyes behold such sweet perfection!
I found her busied in the pious office
Of filial duty, tending her sick father.
Edw. That was a lucky moment, to prefer
My humble suit: touch but the tender string
Of soft compassion in the heart, and love
Will quickly vibrate to its kindred passion;
You urged our royal purpose, then?
Suf. I did,

With all the warmth of friendship; dwelt with pleasure
On every princely virtue, that adorns
Your noble heart; she listened with attention,
And echoed back your praises.
Edw. Was not that
A kind propitious omen?
Suf. Such indeed
Hoping to find it, I called in the powers
Of flattery to my aid, and gazed upon her,
As if confounded by her dazzling beauties—
Conscious she smiled; but when, at length, I spake
Of England's monarch sighing at her feet,
The crimson glow of modesty o'erspread
Her cheek, and gave new lustre to her charms:
She turned aside, and, as she silent bowed
Her doubtful thanks, I marked the pearly tear
Steal down its secret track, and from her breast
Heard a deep sigh, she struggled to conceal.
If I have any judgment, or can trace
The hidden feelings of a woman's heart,
Her's is already fixed: I fear, my liege,
With all that England, all that thou could'st give,
The crown would sit but heavy on her brow.
Edw. Not heavier, Suffolk, than it sits on mine:
My throne is irksome to me; who would wish
To be a sovereign, when Elizabeth
Prefers a subject? Then the impetuous Warwick,
His awful virtue will chastise my weakness.
I dread his censure, dread his keen reproaches;
And dread them more, because they will be just.
I've promised Lewis to espouse his daughter,
To strengthen our alliance: would to Heaven
I had not! If I seek this coy refuser,
And break with France, Warwick will take the alarm;
If once offended, he's inexorable.
Suf. I know him well—Believe me, sir, the high
And haughty spirit, when it meets rebuke,
Is easiest checked, and sinks into submission.
Let him, my liege, who ventures to arraign
His master's conduct, look into his own:
There ever is a corner in the heart
Open to folly; Warwick is not free
From human frailties.
Edw. No; Ambition fires
His noble breast, love triumphs over mine:
But well thou know'st, our eyes are ever open
To others' faults, and shut against our own.
We seldom pity woes we ne'er experienced,
Or pardon weakness which we do not feel:
He is a hero.
Suf. Heroes are but men;
I have some cause to think so—but of that
We'll talk another time: meanwhile, my liege,
I think lord Warwick is a useful friend.
Edw. Aye, and a dangerous foe; the people love,
To adoration love him; if he falls
From his allegiance, crowds will follow him.
England has long been rent by civil broils,
And fain would rest her in the arms of peace;
Her wounds scarce closed, shall Edward open them,
And bid them bleed afresh? believe me, Suffolk,
I would not be the cause of new divisions
Amongst my people, for a thousand kingdoms.
Suf. 'Tis nobly said, and may thy grateful subjects
Revere thy virtues, and reward thy love!
Edw. O! Suffolk, did they know but half the cares,
That wait on royalty, they would not grudge
Their wretched master a few private hours
Of social happiness. If France consents,
I am undone; and Warwick hath, ere this,
Enslaved me: curse on this state policy,
That binds us thus to love at second hand!
Who knows but he may link me to a wretch,
Wed me to folly, ignorance, and pride,
Ill-nature, sickness, or deformity;
And, when I'm chained to misery, coldly tell me,
To sooth my grief, 'twas for the public good!
Suf. How far you have commissioned him, I know not;
But were I worthy to advise, my liege,
I would not be the dupe of his ambition,
But follow nature's dictates, and be happy.
England has charms beside Elizabeth's,
And beauties that——
Edw. No more; my heart is fixed
On her alone; find out this powerful rival,
I charge thee, Suffolk: yet why wish to find,
What, found, will make me wretched? were he bound
In cords of tenderest friendship round my heart,
Dearer than Warwick, dearer than thyself,
Forgive me, but I fear I should abhor him.
O think on something that may yet be done,
To win her to my heart ere Warwick comes!
Suf. I hear he is expected every hour.
Edw. Grant, Heaven, some friendly storm may yet retard him!
I dread his presence here.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My liege, the earl
Of Warwick is arrived.
Edw. Ha! when? how? where?
Would he were buried in the rapid waves
That brought him hither! comes he here to-night?
Mess. My liege, ere now he might have reached the palace,
But that the shouting multitudes press hard
On every side, and seem to worship him. [*Exit.*
Suf. Such adoration
But ill befits the idol, that receives it.
Edw. What's to be done? I cannot, must not see him,
Till all is fixed; once more, my best-loved Suffolk,
Try the soft arts of thy persuasive tongue:
What method canst thou think on, to evade
This promised marriage with ambitious France?
Suf. Summon your council, lay your thoughts before them,

Meet Warwick there, and urge a sovereign's right,
To please himself in that, which should concern
Himself alone—firm Buckingham and I
Will plead your cause against the haughty Warwick,
Whom I would treat with cold civility,
And distant state, which ever angers more
Resentful spirits than the warmth of passion.
Edw. 'Tis well advised!—mean time, if possible,
I will compose my troubled thoughts to rest:
Suffolk, adieu; if Warwick asks for me,
I am not well—I'm hunting in the forest—
I'm busy—stay—remember what I told you,
Touching the earldom, which I mean to give
Her father; that may bring her to the court;
You understand me, Suffolk—fare thee well.
[*Exit* SUF.
Why should I dread to see the man I love—
The man I reverence——Warwick is not changed,
But Edward is—Suffolk, I know, abhors him—
A favourite must be hated—if he urges
This dreadful contract, I shall hate him too:
I cannot live without Elizabeth:
I'll think no more—if I must sacrifice
My friendship or my love—the choice is made.
[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter WARWICK, *speaking to an Officer.*

Warw. 'Tis well: I shall attend his highness' pleasure. [*Comes forward.*
Meet me i' th' council! Warwick might have claimed
A private audience—After all my toils,
My perils in his service, 'tis a cold,
Unkind reception: some base whisperer,
Some needy sycophant, perhaps, hath poisoned
My royal master's ear—or, do I judge
Too rashly? As my embassy concerns
The public welfare, he would honour me
With public thanks—Elizabeth will chide me
For this unkind delay—but honour calls,
And duty to my king: that task performed,
I haste, my love, to happiness and thee. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Council-Chamber.*

Enter King EDWARD, *Dukes of* CLARENCE *and* BUCKINGHAM, *Earls of* SUFFOLK, PEMBROKE, *&c.*

Edw. Good Buckingham, I thank thee for thy counsel,
Nor blame thy honest warmth; I love this freedom;
It is the birthright of an Englishman,
And doth become thee: what says noble Suffolk?
Suf. I would not cross my royal master's will;
But, on my soul, I think this nuptial league
With France preposterous and impolitic!
It cannot last; we are by nature foes,
And nought but mutual poverty and weakness
Can ever make us friends—she wants our aid
Against the powerful Burgundy, and therefore
Throws out this lure of beauty to ensnare you.
That purpose gained, she turns her arms against us.
Pem. Why, let her: if she comes with hostile arm,
England, thank Heaven, is ready to receive her:
I love my country, and revere my king,
As much, perhaps, as honest Buckingham,
Or my good fearful lord of Suffolk here,
Who knows so well, or would be thought to know,
What France will do hereafter: yet I think,
The faith of nations is a thing so sacred,
It ought not to be trifled with—I hate,
As much as you, the unnatural forced alliance;
And yet, my lords, if Warwick is empowered,
For so I hear he is, to treat with Lewis,
I know not how in honour you can swerve
From his conditions. [*Shouting.*
Hark! the hero comes;
These shouts proclaim him near: the joyful people
Will usher in their great deliverer,
As he deserves.

Enter WARWICK.

Edw. Thrice welcome, noble Warwick!
Welcome to all! [*To* CLAR. PEM. *&c.*
Suf. You've had, my lord, I fear,
An arduous task, which few could execute.
But Warwick, in the council and the field,
Alike distinguished, and alike successful.
Edw. What says our cousin France?
Warw. By me, my liege,
He greets you well, and hopes, in closer ties
United, soon to wear a dearer name.
At length, thank Heaven! the iron gates of war
Are closed, and Peace displays her silken banners
O'er the contending nations: every doubt
Is now removed, and confidence established,
I hope, to last for ages.
Edw. Peace, my lord,
Is ever welcome; 'tis the gift of Heaven,
The nurse of science, art's fair patroness,
And merit's best protector; but if France
Would chain us down to ignominious terms,
Cramp our free commerce, and infringe the rights
Of our liege subjects, England may repent
Too late her rash credulity, and peace,
With all her blessings, may be bought too dear.
Warw. The shame would then be his, who made the purchase.

If any doubt my faith, my honest zeal
For thee, and for my country, let him speak,
And I will answer: punish me, just Heaven,
If in the task I have consulted aught
But England's honour, and my sovereign's glory!
Edw. Mistake me not, good Warwick; well I know
Thy spotless truth, thy honour, and thy love;
But glory has no farther charms for me:
Raised, by thy powerful aid, to England's throne,
I ask no more: already I am great
As fame and fortune with their smiles can make me,
And all I wish for now is—to be happy.
Warw. That too, my liege, hath been thy Warwick's care:
Happy thou shalt be, if the fairest form,
That ever caught a gazing lover's eye,
Joined to the sweetest, most engaging virtues,
Can make thee so:—she is indeed a gem,
Fit to adorn the brightest crown: to see,
Is to admire her; trust me, England's self,
The seat of beauty, and the throne of love,
Boasts not a fairer.
Edw. Beauty, good my lord,
Is all ideal; 'tis the wayward child
Of fancy, shifting with the changeful wind
Of fond opinion; what to you appears
The model of perfection, may disgust
My strange capricious taste.
Warw. Such charms would fix
Inconstancy itself:—her winning virtues,
Even if her beauty failed, would soon subdue
The rebel heart, and you would learn to love her.
Edw. Is passion to be learned then? wouldst thou make
A science of affection, guide the heart,
And teach it where to fix? impossible!
'Tis strange philosophy.
[*Rises and comes forward.*
My lord of Warwick,
Your zeal in England's, and in Edward's cause
Merits our thanks; but for the intended marriage
With France's daughter—it may never be.
Warw. Not be! it must: your sacred word is passed,
And cannot be recalled; but three days since
I signed the contract, and my honour's pledged
For the performance: Heavens! whilst fickle France
Is branded 'midst the nations of the earth
For breach of public faith, shall we, my liege,
Practise ourselves the vices we condemn,
Pass o'er a rival nation's every virtue,
And imitate their perfidy alone?
Edw. You'll pardon me, my lord; I thought it part
Of a king's power to have a will, to see
With his own eyes, and in life's little feast,
To cater for himself; but 'tis, it seems,
A privilege his servants can refuse him.
Warw. And so they ought—the king, who cannot conquer
His private interest for the public welfare,
Knows not his duty.
Edw. Kings, my lord, are born
With passions, feelings, hearts—like other men;
Nor see I yet, why Edward's happiness
Must fall a sacrifice to Warwick's honour.
Warw. My honour, sir, is yours; my cause your own:
Who sent me, and whose image did I bear?
The image of a great and glorious king,
Or of a weak and wavering boy?—henceforth,
Choose from the herd of fawning sycophants,
Some needy slave for your mock embassies,
To do your work, and stain the name of England
With foul reproach—Edward, I blush for thee,
And for my country; from this hour, expect
From injured France contempt, with deep resentment
For broken faith, and enmity eternal.
Edw. Eternal be it then! for, as I prize
My inward peace beyond the pomp of state,
And all the tinsel glare of fond ambition,
I will not wed her.—Gracious Heaven! what am I?
The meanest peasant in my realm may choose
His rustic bride, and share with her the sweets
Of mutual friendship and domestic bliss!
Why should my happier subjects, then, deny me
The common rights, the privilege of nature,
And, in a land of freedom, thus conspire
To make their king the only slave amongst them?
Warw. The worst of slaves is he, whom passion rules,
Unchecked by reason, and the powerful voice
Of friendship, which, I fear, is heard no more
By thoughtless Edward.—'Tis the curse of kings
To be surrounded by a venal herd
Of flatterers, that sooth his darling vices,
And rob their master of his subjects' love.
Nay, frown not, sirs! supported as ye are,
I fear ye not. Which of this noble train,
These well-beloved counsellors and friends,
Assembled here to witness my disgrace,
Have urged you to this base, unmanly falsehood?
Shame on you all! to stain the spotless mind
Of uncorrupted youth, undo the work
Of Warwick's friendly hand, and give him back
A sovereign so unlike the noble Edward!
Suff. My lord, we thank you for the kind suggestion,
Howe'er ill-founded; and when next we meet,
To give our voice in aught, that may concern
The public weal, no doubt shall ask your leave,
Ere we proceed.
Pemb. My lord of Suffolk, speak
But for yourself; Warwick hath too much cause
To be offended: in my poor opinion,
Whate'er you courtiers think, the best support
Of England's throne are equity and truth;
Nor will I hold that man my sov'reign's friend,
Who shall exhort him to forsake his word,
And play the hypocrite: what tie shall bind
The subject to obedience, when his king,
Bankrupt in honour, gives the royal sanction
To perfidy and falsehood?
Buck. It becomes
But ill the earl of Pembroke—

Edw. Good my lords,
Let us have no dissentions here; we meet
For other purposes—some few days hence
We shall expect your counsel in affairs
Of moment—for the present, urge no further
This matter—fare ye well.
[*The council break up and disperse.*
Edw. [*Comes to* WARW.] Lord Warwick, keep
In narrower bounds that proud impetuous temper;
It may be fatal: there are private reasons—
When time befits we shall impart them to you;
Meanwhile, if you have friendship, love, or duty,
No more of Bona—I'm determined. [*Exit* EDW.
Warw. So:
'Tis well, 'tis very well: I have deserved it;
I've borne this callow eagle on my wing,
And now he spurns me from him; 'tis a change
I little looked for, and sits heavy on me:
Alas, how doubly painful is the wound,
When 'tis inflicted by the hand we love!
Cruel, ungrateful Edward!——
Ha! who's here?
The captive queen! if she has aught to ask
Of me, she comes in luckless hour, for I
Am powerless now.

Enter MARGARET *of* ANJOU.

Warw. Will Margaret of Anjou
Thus deign to visit her acknowledged foe?
Marg. Alas! my lord, inured to wretchedness
As I am, and familiar with misfortune,
I harbour no resentment; have long since
Forgot, that ever Warwick was my foe,
And only wish to prove myself his friend.
Warw. Talk not of friendship, 'tis an empty name,
And lives but in idea; once, indeed,
I thought I had a friend.——
Marg. Whose name was—Edward;
Read I aright, my lord, and am I not
A shrewd diviner? Yes, that downcast eye
And gloomy aspect say I am: you look
As if the idol, made by your own hands,
Had fallen upon, and crushed you; is it not so?
Warw. Amazement! nought escapes thy piercing eye,
And penetrating judgment: 'tis too true,
I am a poor, disgraced, dishonoured slave,
Not worth thy seeking; leave me, for the tide
Of court preferment flows another way.
Marg. The feast, perhaps, you have provided, suits not
With Edward's nicer palate; he disdains,
How sweet so'er, to taste a foreign banquet,
And relishes no dainties but his own:
Am I again mistaken?
Warw. Sure thou deal'st
With some all-knowing spirit, who imparts
Each secret purpose to thee: else how know'st thou,
That Edward had refused to wed the princess?
Marg. Oh! it requires no supernatural aid
To trace his actions, nor has Margaret trod
The paths of life with unobserving eye.
I could have told you this long since—for know
The choice is made, the nuptial rites prepared,
Which, but for your return, as unexpected
As undesired, had been, ere this, complete;
And, as in duty bound, you then had paid
Your due obedience to our English queen.
Warw. Determined, say'st thou? Gracious Heaven! 'tis well
I am returned.
Marg. Indeed, my lord, you came
A little out of season; 'twas unkind
To interrupt your master's happiness,
To blast so fair a passion in its bloom,
And check the rising harvest of his love.
Warw. Margaret, I thank thee—yes, it must be so:
His blushes, his confusion, all confirm it;
And yet I am amazed, astonished.
Marg. Wherefore?——
Is it so strange a youthful prince should love?
Is it so strange, a mind, unfraught with wisdom,
And lifted high with proud prosperity,
Should follow pleasure through the crooked paths
Of falsehood, should forsake a useless friend
For the warm joys of animating beauty?
Warw. No: but 'tis strange, that he, who knows how much
He owed to Warwick; he, who every hour
Tastes the rich stream of bounty, should forget
The fountain, whence it flowed.
Marg. Alas! my lord,
Had you been chastened in affliction's school,
As I have been, and taught by sad experience
To know mankind, you had not fallen a prey
To such delusion.
Warw. Was it like a friend,
Was it like Edward, to conceal his love!
Some base, insinuating, artful woman,
With borrowed charms, perhaps——
Marg. Hold, hold, my lord,
Be not too rash: who fights in darkness oft
May wound a bosom friend: perhaps you wrong
The best, and most accomplished of her sex.
Warw. Know you the lady?
Marg. But as fame reports;
Of peerless beauty and transcendent charms,
But for her virtue—I must ask of—you.
Warw. Of me! What virtues? Whose?
Marg. Elizabeth's.
Warw. Amazement! no: it must not, cannot be:
Elizabeth! he could not, dare not do it!
Confusion! I shall soon discover all. [*Aside.*
But what have I to do with Edward's choice,
Whoe'er she be, if he refuses mine?
Marg. Dissimulation sits but ill, my lord,
On minds like yours: I am a poor weak woman,
And so, it seems, you think me; but suppose
That same all-knowing spirit, which you raised,
Who condescends so kindly to instruct me,
Should whisper—Warwick knows the power of love
As well as Edward; that Elizabeth
Was his first wish, the idol of his soul;
What say you? Might I venture to believe it?

Warw. Margaret, you might; for 'tis in vain to hide
A thought from thee; it might have told you too,
If it be so, there is not such a wretch
On earth as Warwick; give me but the proof—
Marg. Lord Suffolk was last night dispatched to Grafton,
To offer her a share in Edward's throne.
Warw. Which she refused: did she not, Margaret? Say
She did!
Marg. I know not that, my lord; but crowns
Are dazzling meteors in a woman's eye;
Such strong temptations, few of us, I fear,
Have virtue to resist.
Warw. Elizabeth
Has every virtue! I will not doubt her faith.
Marg. Edward is young and handsome.
Warw. Curses on him!
Think'st thou he knew my fond attachment there?
Marg. O, passing well, my lord; and when 'twas urged
How deeply it would affect you, swore by Heaven,
Imperious Warwick ne'er should be the master
Of charms like hers; 'twas happiness, he said,
Beyond a subject's merit to deserve,
Beyond his hope to wish for, or aspire to.
Warw. But for that Warwick, Edward's self had been
A subject still—and—may be so—hereafter.
Thou smil'st at my misfortunes.
Marg. I must smile,
When I behold a subtle statesman thus
Duped and deluded by a shallow boy,
Sent on a fruitless errand to expose
His country and himself—it was indeed
A master-stroke of policy, beyond,
One should have thought, the reach of years so green
As Edward's, to dispatch the weeping lover,
And seize the glorious opportunity
Of tampering with his mistress here at home.
Warw. Did Nevil, Rutland, Clifford, bleed for this!
Marg. For this, doth Henry languish in a dungeon,
And wretched Margaret live a life of woe?
For this you gave the crown to pious Edward,
And thus he thanks you for his kingdom.
Warw. Crowns
Are baubles, fit for children like himself
To play with; I have scattered many of them:
But thus to cross me in my dearest hope,
The sweet reward of all my toils for him
And for his country; if I suffer it,
If I forgive him, may I live the scorn
Of men, a branded coward, and old age,
Without or love or reverence, be my portion!
Henceforth, good Margaret, know me for thy friend:
We will have noble vengeance: are there not
Still left among the lazy sons of peace
Some busy spirits, who wish well to thee,
And to thy cause?
Marg. There are; resentment sleeps,
But is not dead. Beneath the hollow cover
Of loyalty, the slumbering ashes lie
Unheeded; Warwick's animating breath
Will quickly light them into flames again.
Warw. Then, Edward, from this moment I abjure thee;
Oh! I will make thee ample recompense
For all the wrongs that I have done the house
Of Lancaster: go, summon all thy friends;
Be quick, good Margaret, haste, ere I repent,
And yield my soul to perjured York again.
The king, I think, gives you free liberty
To range abroad?
Marg. He doth, and I will use it,
As I would ever use the gift of foes,
To his destruction.
Warw. That arch-pander, Suffolk,
That minister of vice—but time is precious;
To-morrow, Margaret, we will meet in private,
And have some further conference; mean time
Devise, consult, use every means against
Our common foe: remember, from this hour,
Warwick's thy friend—be secret and be happy.
[*Exit.*
Marg. What easy fools these cunning statesmen are,
With all their policy, when once they fall
Into a woman's power! This gallant leader,
This blustering Warwick, how the hero shrunk
And lessened to my sight! Elizabeth,
I thank thee for thy wonder-working charms;
The time perhaps may come, when I shall stand
Indebted to them for—the throne of England.
Proud York, beware; for Lancaster's great name
Shall rise superior in the lists of fame:
Fortune, that long had frowned, shall smile at last,
And make amends for all my sorrows past. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter MARGARET, CLIFFORD, *and Attendants.*

Marg. Dispatch these letters straight to Scotland—this,
To the French envoy—these, to the earl of Pembroke.
[*To a gentleman.*
Thus far, my friend, hath fortune favoured us
[*Turning to Lady* CLIFFORD.
Beyond our hopes: the soul of haughty Warwick

Is all on fire, and puling Edward loves
With most romantic ardour—O my Clifford,
You would have smiled to see how artfully
I played upon him: flattered, soothed, provoked,
And wrought him to my purpose: we are linked
In firmest bonds of amity and love.
Clif. Hath Warwick, then, so soon forgot his Edward?
Think'st thou the frantic earl will e'er exert
His ill-directed powers to pull down
The royal structure, which himself had raised?
Never.
Marg. What is there, disappointed love
And unrestrained ambition will not do?
I tell thee, we are sworn and cordial friends.
Clif. Thou know'st he hates the house of Lancaster.
Marg. No matter——he has marvellous good skill
In making kings, and I have business for him.
Clif. And canst thou, then, forget the cruel wrongs,
The deep-felt injuries of oppressive Warwick,
To join the hand, that forged thy husband's chains,
And robbed thee of a crown?
Marg. But what—my Clifford,
If the same hand, that ravished, should restore it!
'Tis a court friendship, and may last as long
As interest shall direct: I've not forgot,
No, nor forgiven; I hate, abhor, detest him;
But I will use him as my instrument,
My necessary tool; I will make him draw
His traitorous sword, to sheathe it in the breast
Of him he loves, then point it to his own.
Yes, Clifford, I have twined me round his heart;
Like the fell serpent crept into his bosom,
That I might sting more surely: he shall perish;
I keep him for the last dear precious morsel,
To crown the glorious banquet of revenge.
Clif. 'Tis what he merits from us; yet the attempt
Were dangerous; he is still the people's idol.
Marg. And so, perhaps, shall Margaret be; applause
Waits on success; the fickle multitude,
Like the light straw, that floats along the stream,
Glide with the current still, and follow fortune.
Our prospect brightens every hour: the people
Are ripe for a revolt: by civil wars,
Long time inured to savage scenes of plunder
And desolation, they delight in war:
These English heroes, when once fleshed with slaughter,
Like the keen mastiff, lose not soon the track
Of vengeance, nor forget the taste of blood.
Clif. What further succours have we to depend on,
Beside earl Warwick's?
Marg. O, his name alone,
Will be an army to us.
Clif. If we have it:
Resentment is a short-lived passion—what
If Warwick should relent, and turn again
To Edward?
Marg. Then I have a bosom friend,
That shall be ready to reward him for it.
But I have better hopes: without his aid,
We are not friendless: Scotland's hardy sons,
Who smile at danger, and defy the storm,
Will leave their barren mountains to defend
That liberty they love; add too the aid
Of gallant Pembroke, and the powers, which France
Will send to vindicate her injured honour:
Ere Edward can collect his force and take
The field, we shall be thirty thousand strong.
Clif. But what becomes of the young prince?
Marg. Aye; there
I am, indeed, unhappy! O my child!
How shall I set him free? hear, Nature, hear
A mother's prayer! O guide me with thy counsel,
And teach me how to save my darling boy!
Aye, now I have it: monitress divine,
I thank thee: yes; I wait but for the means
Of his escape, then fly this hated palace,
Nor will return till I can call it mine. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter EDWARD *and* SUFFOLK.

Edw. I fear we've gone too far: the indignant Warwick
Ill brooked our steady purpose; marked you, Suffolk,
With what an eye of scorn he turned him from us,
And lowered defiance—that prophetic woman!
Half of her curse already is fulfilled,
And I have lost my friend.
Suf. Some friends, perhaps,
Are better lost: you'll pardon me, my liege;
But, were it fitting, I could tell a tale
Would soon convince you, Warwick is as weak—
Edw. As Edward, thou would'st say.
Suf. But 'twill distress
Thy noble heart too much; I dare not, sir;
Yet one day you must know it.
Edw. Then, by thee
Let it be told me, Suffolk; thy kind hand
Will best administer the bitter draught:
Go on, my Suffolk, speak, I charge thee, speak.
Suf. That rival, whom you wished me to discover——
Edw. Aye, what of him! quick, tell me, hast thou found
The happy traitor? give me but to know,
That I may wreak my speedy veangeance on him.
Suf. Suppose that rival were the man, whom most
You loved, the man, perhaps, whom most you feared;
Suppose 'twere—Warwick!
Edw. Ha! it cannot be:
I would not think it for a thousand worlds——
Warwick in love with her, impossible!
Now, Suffolk, do I fear thou speak'st from envy,
And jealous hatred of the noble Warwick,
Not from the love of justice or of Edward.

Where didst thou learn this falsehood?
Suf. From the lips
Of truth; from one, whose honour and whose word
You will not question; from Elizabeth.
Edw. From her! nay, then, I fear it must be so.
Suf. When last I saw her, for again I went
By your command, though hopeless of success,
With all the eloquence that I
Was master of, I urged your ardent passion;
Told her how much, how tenderly you loved her,
And pressed with eagerness to know the cause
Of her unkind refusal; till at length,
Reluctantly, with blushes, she confessed
There was a cause; she thanked you for your goodness,
Twas more, she said, much more than she deserved:
She ever should revere her king: and if
She had a heart to give, it should be Edward's.
Edw. So kind, and yet so cruel! well, go on.
Suf. Then told me all the story of her love,
That Warwick long had wooed her——that her hand
Was promised, soon as he returned from France,
Though once her father cruelly opposed it,
They were, by his consent, to be united.
Edw. O never, Suffolk, may I live to see
That dreadful hour! designing hypocrite!
Are these his arts? is this the friend I loved?
By Heaven! she shall be mine; I will assert
A soyereign's right, and tear her from him; what
If he rebel? another civil war!
'Tis terrible! O that I could shake off
This cumbrous garb of majesty, that clings
So close around me, meet him man to man,
And try who best deserves her! but, when kings
Grow mad, their guiltless subjects pay the forfeit.
Horrible thought! good Suffolk, for a while
I would be private; therefore wait without;
Let me have no intruders; above all,
Keep Warwick from my sight. [*Exit* SUF.

Enter WARWICK.

Warw. Behold him here!
No welcome guest, it seems, unless I ask
My lord of Suffolk's leave; there was a time,
When Warwick wanted not his aid to gain
Admission here.
Edw. There was a time, perhaps,
When Warwick more desired, and more deserved it.
Warw. Never. I have been a foolish faithful slave;
All my best years, the morning of my life,
Have been devoted to your service: what
Are now the fruits? disgrace and infamy;
My spotless name, which never yet the breath
Of calumny had tainted, made the mock
For foreign fools to carp at: but 'tis fit
Who trust in princes, should be thus rewarded.
Edw. I thought, my lord, I had full well repaid
Your services with honours, wealth, and power
Unlimited: thy all-directing hand
Guided in secret every latent wheel
Of government, and moved the whole machine;
Warwick was all in all, and powerless Edward
Stood, like a cypher, in a great account.
Warw. Who gave that cypher worth, and seated thee
On England's throne? thy undistinguished name
Had rotted in the dust from whence it sprang,
And mouldered in oblivion, had not Warwick
Dug from its sordid mine the useless ore,
And stamped it with a diadem. Thou know'st
This wretched country, doomed, perhaps, like Rome,
To fall by its own self-destroying hand,
Tost for so many years in the rough sea
Of civil discord, but for me had perished.
In that distressful hour I seized the helm,
Bade the rough waves subside in peace, and steered
Your shattered vessel safe unto the harbour.
You may despise, perhaps, that useless aid,
Which you no longer want; but know, proud youth,
He, who forgets a friend, deserves a foe.
Edw. Know, too, reproach, for benefits received,
Pays every debt, and cancels obligation.
Warw. Why, that indeed is frugal honesty,
A thrifty saving knowledge, when the debt
Grows burthensome, and cannot be discharged,
A spunge will wipe out all, and cost you nothing.
Edw. When you have counted o'er the numerous train
Of mighty gifts your bounty lavished on me,
You may remember next the injuries,
Which I have done you: let me know them all;
And I will make you ample satisfaction.
Warw. Thou canst not; thou hast robbed me of a jewel
It is not in thy power to restore:
I was the first, shall future annals say,
That broke the sacred bond of public trust
And mutual confidence; ambassadors,
In after times, mere instruments, perhaps,
Of venal statesmen, shall recall my name
To witness, that they want not an example,
And plead my guilt, to sanctify their own.
Amidst the herd of mercenary slaves,
That haunt your court, could none be found but Warwick,
To be the shameless herald of a lye?
Edw. And wouldst thou turn the vile reproach on me?
If I have broke my faith, and stained the name
Of England, thank thy own pernicious counsels,
That urged me to it, and extorted from me
A cold consent to what my heart abhorred.
Warw. I've been abused, insulted, and betrayed;
My injured honour cries aloud for vengeance;
Her wounds will never close!
Edw. These gusts of passion
Will but inflame them; if I have been right
Informed, my lord, besides these dangerous scars
Of bleeding honour, you have other wounds

As deep, though not so fatal: such perhaps
As none but fair Elizabeth can cure.
Warw. Elizabeth!
Edw. Nay, start not, I have cause
To wonder most: I little thought, indeed,
When Warwick told me I might learn to love,
He was himself so able to instruct me;
But I've discovered all.———
Warw. And so have I;
Too well I know thy breach of friendship there,
Thy fruitless base endeavours to supplant me.
Edw. I scorn, it, sir—Elizabeth hath charms,
And I have equal right with you to admire them:
Nor see I aught so godlike in the form,
So all-commanding in the name of Warwick,
That he alone should revel in the charms
Of beauty, and monopolize perfection.
I knew not of your love.
Warw. By Heaven, 'tis false!
You knew it all, and meanly took occasion,
Whilst I was busied in the noble office,
Your grace thought fit to honour me withal,
To tamper with a weak unguarded woman,
To bribe her passions high, and basely steal
A treasure, which your kingdom could not purchase.
Edw. How know you that? but be it as it may,
I had a right, nor will I tamely yield
My claim to happiness, the privilege
To choose the partner of my throne and bed:
It is a branch of my prerogative.
Warw. Prerogative!—what's that? the boast of tyrants:
A borrowed jewel, glittering in the crown
With specious lustre, lent but to betray.
You had it, sir, and hold it—from the people.
Edw. And therefore do I prize it; I would guard
Their liberties, and they shall strengthen mine:
But when proud faction and her rebel crew
Insult their sovereign, trample on his laws,
And bid defiance to his power, the people,
In justice to themselves, will then defend
His cause, and vindicate the rights they gave.
Warw. Go to your darling people, then; for soon,
If I mistake not, 'twill be needful; try
Their boasted zeal, and see if one of them
Will dare to lift his arm up in your cause,
If I forbid them.
Edw. Is it so, my lord!
Then mark my words: I've been your slave too long,
And you have ruled me with a rod of iron;
But henceforth know, proud peer, I am thy master,
And will be so: the king, who delegates
His power to others' hands, but ill deserves
The crown he wears.
Warw. Look well, then, to your own;
It sits but loosely on your head; for know,
The man, who injured Warwick, never passed
Unpunished yet.
Edw. Nor he, who threatened Edward—
You may repent it, sir—my guards there—seize
This traitor, and convey him to the Tower!
There let him learn obedience.
[*Guards enter, seize* WARWICK, *and endeavour to disarm him.*
Warw. Slaves, stand off!
If I must yield my sword, I'll give it him,
Whom it so long has served; there's not a part
In this old faithful steel, that is not stained
With English blood in grateful Edward's cause.
Give me my chains, they are the bands of friendship,
Of a king's friendship; for his sake awhile
I'll wear them.
Edw. Hence! away with him———
Warw. 'Tis well:
Exert your power, it may not last you long;
For know, though Edward may forget his friend,
That England will not.—Now, sir, I attend you.
[*Exit.*
Edw. Presumptuous rebel—ha! who's here?

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My liege,
Queen Margaret, with the prince her son, are fled;
In a few hours she hopes—for so we learn
From those, who have pursued her—to be joined
By the earl of Warwick; in his name, it seems,
She has already raised three thousand men.
Edw. Warwick in league with her! O Heaven! 'tis well
We've crushed the serpent, ere his poison spread
Throughout our kingdom—guard the palace gates;
Keep double watch: summon my troops together:
Where is my brother Clarence, Buckingham,
And Pembroke? we must check this foul rebellion.
[*Exit Mess.*

Enter the Earl of SUFFOLK.

Suf. My liege, the duke of Clarence———
Edw. What of him?
Suf. Hath left the court; this moment I beheld him
In conference with Pembroke, who, it seems,
Is Margaret's firmest friend: 'tis whispered, both
Will join the queen.
Edw. Well: 'tis no matter; I
Have deeper cause for grief: he cannot feel
A brother's falsehood, who has lost a friend,
A friend like Warwick—Suffolk, thou behold'st me
Betrayed, deserted by the man I loved;
Treated with cold indifference by her,
Whom I adored; forsaken by my brother,
And threatened by the subjects I protect;
Oppressed on every side: but, thou shalt see,
I have a soul superior to misfortunes.
Though rebel Clarence wrings my tortured heart,
And faithless Warwick braves me, we will yet
Maintain our right——Come on, my friend! thou know'st,
Without his boasted aid, I could have gained
The crown; without him, now, I will preserve it.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Tower.*

Enter the Earl of WARWICK.

Warw. Mistaken mortals plan delusive schemes
Of bliss, and call futurity their own,
Yet are not masters of a moment—This
Was the appointed time, the very day,
Which should have joined me to Elizabeth
In nuptial bonds. O cruel memory,
Do not torment me!—If there be a crime
Of deeper die, than all the guilty train
Of human vices, 'tis——ingratitude.
'Tis now two years since Henry lost the crown;
And here he is, even in this very prison,
A fellow captive now. Disgraceful thought!
How will he smile to meet his conqueror here!
O for that stoic apathy, which lulls
The drowsy soul to sweet forgetfulness!
But 'twill not be:—Elizabeth, where art thou?
Perhaps with Edward——Oh! that thought distracts me;
It is, I fear, as Margaret said; she's false.
But, when I look around me, can I hope
To find one virtue left in human kind?
My Pembroke, too? am I so soon forgotten?
O no; he comes——

Enter the Earl of PEMBROKE.

Pemb. My friend!
Warw. My Pembroke, welcome:
Thee I have found most just and kind;
But, in the darkness of adversity,
The jewel, friendship, shines with double lustre.
Pemb. I am not of the insect train, that bask
In fortune's sunshine, and when evening damps
Arise, are seen no more: no, Warwick; what
I speak, I mean; you have been hardly treated.
Warw. Oh! Pembroke, didst thou know but half the wrongs,
That I have suffered, thou would'st pity me.
Pemb. I would do more, much more, my Warwick: he,
Who only pities, but insults the wretched;
I come with nobler views; I come to tell thee,
That I have felt thy injuries as my own,
And will revenge them too.
Warw. How kind thou art
To feel for Warwick!
Pemb. Every honest breast
Must feel the injuries, that a good man suffers:
Thine is the common cause of all: adieu
To English freedom, when our liberty
Shall be dependent on a sovereign's nod;
When years of honest service shall be paid
With infamy and chains!
Warw. I've not deserved them.
Pemb. Nor shalt thou wear them long; for thou hast great
And powerful friends—the noble duke of Clarence,
Behold his signet—this, my Warwick, gained me
Admission here——we must be secret.
Warw. Ha!
Then I am not forsaken: Clarence!——
Pemb. Yes:
The gallant youth, with honest zeal, declared
He loved his brother much, but justice more.
Warw. Then, Edward, I defy thee: generous Clarence!
Thou know'st the man, who thus could treat a friend,
Would soon forget a brother—But say, Pembroke,
How stands the duke of Buckingham?
Pemb. Fast bound
To Edward; he, and that smooth courtier Suffolk,
Are the two rotten pillars, that support
His tottering throne: but Margaret——
Warw. Aye: how fares
My new ally? has she escaped the tyrant?
Pemb. She has: and by some wondrous means contrived
To free her captive son.
Warw. Though I abhor,
I must admire that enterprising woman:
Her active mind is ever on the wing
In search of fresh expedients, to recover
The crown she lost.
Pemb. Already she has raised
A powerful army; all the secret foes
Of York's ambitious line rush forth in crowds,
And join her standard: ere to-morrow's sun
Shall dawn upon us, she will set thee free.
Warw. Oh! Pembroke, nothing wounds the generous mind
So deep as obligations to a foe.
Is there no way to liberty, my friend,
But through the bloody paths of civil war?
Pemb. I fear there is not.
Warw. Then it must be so:
I could have wished—but freedom and revenge,
On any terms, are welcome.
Pemb. Here, then, join we
Our hands——
Warw. Our hearts.
Pemb. Now, Warwick, be thou firm
In thy resolves; let no unmanly fears,
No foolish fond remembrance of past friendship,
Unnerve thy arm, or shake thy steady purpose.
Warw. No; by my wrongs it shall not: once, thou know'st,
I loved him but too well, and this vile prison
Is my reward! O! give me but the use
Of this once powerful arm, and thou shalt see
How it shall punish falsehood.—Are thy forces
Prepared?
Pemb. They are, and wait but for my orders:
Clarence will join us soon: our first great end

Is to secure thy liberty; that done,
We haste to seize the palace, and redeem
The fair Elizabeth.
Warw. Redeem her, ha!
Is she a captive too?
Pemb. A willing slave;
A gay state prisoner, left to roam at large
O'er the young monarch's palace.
Warw. Aye, my Pembroke,
That's more inviting than a prison. Oh,
She's false, she's false!—Who sent her there?
Pemb. She came,
It seems, to thank him for his royal bounties
To her good father, the new earl of Rivers,
Who will, no doubt, persuade her to accept——
Warw. Of Edward's hand——distraction! fly, my friend;
Haste thee to Margaret: tell her, if she hopes
For Warwick's aid, she must release him now,
Ere Edward's ill-timed mercy shall prevent her.
Pemb. I go: my friend, adieu! when next we meet,
I hope to bring thee liberty. [*Exit.*
Warw. Farewell.
She's lost! she's gone! that base seducer, Edward,
Hath wrought on her weak mind! it must be so.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My lord,
The lady Elizabeth.
Warw. Amazement! sure
It cannot be! Admit her, sir—why, what
[*Exit Mess.*
Could bring her here? Edward has sent her hither,
To see if I will crouch to him for pardon.
Be still, my jealous heart.

Enter ELIZABETH.

Eliz. My Warwick!
Warw. 'Tis a grace I looked not for,
That a fair favourite, who so late had tasted
The pleasures of a court, should condescend
To visit thus a poor abandoned captive.
Eliz. I come to take my portion of misfortune,
To pour the balm of comfort in, and heal,
If possible, the wounds, which I had made.
Too well I know, I was the fatal cause
Of all thy sorrows—but the noble Edward,
For so, indeed, he is——
Warw. And art thou come,
To plead the cause of him, who sent me hither?
Eliz. I came to be the messenger of peace,
To calm thy troubled soul, and give thee rest,
To teach my Warwick to forget his wrongs.
Warw. Forget my wrongs! was that thy errand here,
To teach me low submission to a tyrant?
To ask forgiveness, kneel, and deprecate
The wrath of blustering Edward? If thou com'st,
On terms like these, to bring me freedom, know
It will not be accepted: Now I see
Through all your arts; by Heaven! I'd rather lose
A thousand lives, than owe one to his bounty.
Eliz. Either my Warwick is much changed, and so,
I fear, he is, or he would never talk
Thus coldly to me, never would despise
A life so precious, if he knew how much
Elizabeth had suffered to preserve it.
The gallant Edward, won by my entreaties——
Warw. Entreaties! didst thou, then, descend so low,
As to entreat him for me?
Eliz. Hadst thou seen,
When I implored him to forgive my Warwick,
How kind he looked, how his repenting heart
Heaved with the pangs of agonizing friendship,
Thou wouldst have pitied him.
Warw. Deceitful woman!
I see thy falsehood now; I am betrayed;
And thou art leagued with Edward to destroy me.
Go to your royal lover, and unite
Those only fit companions for each other,
A broken friendship, and a perjured love!
Give up discarded Warwick, and, to make
The compact firm, cement it with my blood.
Eliz. I thought the soul of Warwick far above
Such mean suspicions. Shall the man, whose truth,
Whose constancy, and love, have been so long
My bright example, shall he stoop so low,
As thus to listen to an idle tale,
Told by some prating courtier? if indeed
Thou couldst believe it, I should pity thee.
Warw. Where is your father, the new earl of Rivers?
Why sends he not his forces to our aid?
Eliz. He cannot: honour, gratitude, forbid,
That he should lift up his rebellious arm
Against his benefactor! well thou know'st,
Of late, when civil discord reigned amongst us,
He fought with Henry, and with Henry fell:
When injured Edward generously forgave,
Restored his forfeit lands, and late advanced him
To rank and title.
Warw. Infamy and shame;
The common nets, which fearful knavery spreads
To catch ambition's fools: mean sordid bribes.
We know the treasure they were meant to purchase.
Eliz. Unkind suggestion! how have I deserved it?
Have I for this refused a youthful monarch,
And spurned his offered sceptre at my feet,
To be reproached at last by cruel Warwick?
Had I once listened to him; had these eyes
Been dazzled with the splendour of a court,
I need not thus have changed it for a dungeon.
But, since I am suspected, witness Heaven,
And witness Warwick to my vows! henceforth,
Dear as thou art, I cast thee from my love;
Elizabeth will never wed—a traitor.
Warw. Am I awake, and did Elizabeth
Say she would never wed her faithful Warwick?
Then bear me witness too, all-judging Heaven!
Here yield I up all visionary dreams
Of future bliss, of liberty, or life.
Even the sweet hope of vengeance, that alone

Sustained my spirit, loses all its charms;
I wished for freedom but to purchase thine:
For life, but to enjoy it with my love,
And she disclaims me.
Eliz. Heaven forbid! O Warwick,
Let not the tide of passion thus o'erwhelm
Thy reason.
Warw. Canst thou pardon me? thou know'st
The unguarded warmth, the weakness of my nature.
I would not wrong thee, but I've been so oft,
So cruelly deceived!
Eliz. I know thou hast;
But never by Elizabeth.
Warw. O no!
It is impossible, that perfidy
Should wear a form like thine. [*Looking at her.*
I wonder not,
That Edward loved; no; when I look on thee,
All beauteous, all enchanting as thou art,
By Heaven! I think I could almost forgive him.
Eliz. Then, wherefore not be reconciled?
Warw. To whom?
The author of my wrongs? It cannot be:
Know, I have promised Margaret to destroy him.
Eliz. Destroy thy friend! ungenerous, cruel Warwick!
Is't not enough, that thou hast triumphed here?
Already we have pierced his noble heart
With the keen pangs of disappointed love:
And would'st thou wound his breast with added sorrows;
Would'st thou involve a nation in his ruin?
Warw. Elizabeth, no more: alas! too well
Thou know'st, there is a powerful advocate
In Warwick's breast, that pleads for perjured Edward.
Eliz. Cherish the soft emotion, O my Warwick!—
Warw. That angel form can never plead in vain;
But then, my friends—where is my solemn vow
To Margaret, and to Pembroke? There's the tie;
My honour's dearer to me——
Eliz. Than thy love;
Dearer, much dearer, than Elizabeth!
But I have done: farewell, my lord; I see
Thy deep resentment is not to be moved
By my weak influence o'er thee. [*Going.*
Warw. Stay, I charge thee.
Eliz. What is this phantom, Honour, this proud idol,
That tramples thus on every humble virtue?
This cruel, bloody Moloch, that delights
In human sacrifice! O! would to Heaven
I were its only victim! but, with me,
You offer up your country and your king.
Warw. Think on my vow, think on my promise given.
Eliz. Thy league with Margaret must be fatal: grant
We should succeed, and Lancaster once more
Assume the throne; how dear the victory,
That's purchased with our fellow-subjects' blood!
Alas! such triumphs make the conqueror weep.
But if we fail!——
Warw. Impossible.
Eliz. O! think
Betimes! what dreadful punishments await
The vanquished rebel: thou, perhaps, my love,
Shalt then be doomed on the ignominious block
To fall inglorious; and, when thou art gone,
Who shall defend thy poor Elizabeth?
Warw. Alarming thought! It staggers my firm purpose,
And makes me half a villain.

Enter an Officer.

Offi. Madam, the king demands your presence: I
Have orders to convey you to the palace.
Warw. And wilt thou leave me?
Eliz. This, my Warwick, this
Is the decisive moment; now determine,
Accept of mercy, ere it be too late;
Ere hasty Edward—Shall I say thou wilt
Return to thy obedience, and receive
Thy pardon? Shall I? Speak, my love.
Warw. Perhaps
I may accept it, if 'tis brought by thee.
Eliz. Then we shall meet in happiness—
Warw. Farewell! [*Exit* ELIZ.
Warw. Now to those worst companions in affliction,
My own sad thoughts, again; they're gloomy all;
And, like my habitation, full of horror.
I like not Edward's message—if he hears
My league with Margaret, he still has power
To make me feel his rage: I have deserved it—
[*A trampling heard without.*
Methought I heard a noise—this way they come;
Perhaps it is the messenger of death——

Enter PEMBROKE.

Pemb. The messenger of vengeance—see her sword;
Accept it, and be free. [*Offers a sword.*
Warw. First let me know,
To whom I am indebted for it.
Pemb. To me.
Soon as the rumour of thy foul disgrace
Had reached the public ear, the impatient people,
Uncertain of thy fate, tumultuous thronged
Around the palace, and demanded thee;
'Give us our Warwick! give us back,' they cried,
'Our hero, our deliverer!'—I stepped forth,
And bade them, instant, if they wished to save
The best of men from infamy and death,
To follow me: transported they obeyed:
I led them hither: forced the prison gates,
And brought thee this—direct it as thou wilt.
[*Gives the sword.*
Warw. Welcome, once more, thou dearest gift of Heaven,
Immortal liberty! my friend, I thank thee.
O Pembroke, would thou hadst been here! my love,
My dear Elizabeth is true.
Pemb. At least
You think so.

Warw. She has told me such sweet truths!
Edward repents him sorely, he is grieved
At his ingratitude.
Pemb. And well he may;
I fear thou art betrayed: alas, my Warwick,
Thy open, generous, unsuspecting virtue,
Thinks every heart as honest as thy own.
Thou know'st not Edward—nor Elizabeth.
The kingdom is in arms, and every hour,
It is expected France will join the queen:
England will want its great protector's aid.
Edward and Rivers have conspired to cheat
Thy credulous ear, and who so fit to spread
The flimsy web as thy Elizabeth,
Their fair ambassadress? I see thou'rt caught.
Warw. By Heaven, it may be so! I am the sport
Of fortune and of fraud.
Pemb. Away, my friend:
It is not now a time to think of her:
Margaret, supported by thy powerful name,
And joined by Clarence, waits us, at the head
Of fifteen thousand men, who, eager all
To crush a tyrant, and pull down oppression,
Attend thy wished-for presence; not a soldier
Will act or move, till Warwick shall direct them.
Edward and England's fate depend on thee.
Warw. Away, my friend, I'll follow thee.
[*Exit* PEM.
Yet stop
A moment—let not passion hurry me
To base dishonour—if my country calls
For Warwick's aid, shall I not hear her voice,
And save her? Pembroke may have private views,
And subtle Margaret too—Elizabeth!
I must not lose thee—O! direct me, Heaven!
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter ELIZABETH.

Eliz. The royal pardon came too late, and Pembroke
Already has released him; he is gone—
Elizabeth may never see him more.
A thousand terrors haunt me; a fond father,
A guiltless sovereign, a distracted lover,
Fame, fortune, friends, and country, all depend
On one eventful moment—hark! the sound
Of distant groans; perhaps the king—perhaps
My Warwick bleeds. O! agonizing thought!
Great God of armies, whose all-guiding hand
Directs the fate of nations, O! look down
On thy own image! let not cruel discord
Divide their kindred souls! in pity hear,
Pour thy benignant spirit o'er their hearts,
And once more knit them in the bonds of peace!

Enter SUFFOLK.

Suff. The prayer of innocence is always heard.
Eliz. Ha! Suffolk, whither hast'st thou? art thou come—
Suff. I come to heal thy sorrows, lovely fair one,
To tell thee, Edward, and thy much-loved Warwick,
Once more are friends.
Eliz. Indeed! O welcome news!
My joy's too great for utterance: tell me, Suffolk,
How was it? Speak, is Warwick safe? O Heaven!
Suff. A moment's patience, and I'll tell thee all.
Margaret, thou know'st, had raised a powerful force,
That doubled Edward's troops; elate with pride,
And almost sure of victory, she urged
The tardy spearmen; on they rushed, as if
Secure of conquest: the unhappy king
Stood nobly firm, and seemed to brave his fate,
When Warwick, like a guardian god, appeared:
His noble mien, and all-commanding look,
Struck deep attention; every eye was bent
Upon him, and an awful silence reigned
O'er either host. He raised his voice on high,
And 'Stop,' he cried, 'your sacrilegious hands,
'Nor touch my friend: who pierces Edward's breast,
'Must pass through mine: I raised him to the throne,
'And will support him there: to you I gave,
'From you, my fellow soldiers, I expect him:
'Howe'er the cruel wrongs have wounded me,
'He never injured you, and I forgive him.'
He spake, and instant through the gazing crowd
A murmur ran; down dropped their nerveless arms,
As if enchanted by some magic power,
And with one voice they cried, long live king Edward!
Eliz. How powerful is the tongue of eloquence,
When in the cause of virtue!—well, what followed?
Suff. Encouraged by the shouting soldiers, Edward
On like a modest virgin wishing came,
Yet fearful. Warwick, with a bridegroom's speed,
To meet him flew; into each other's arms
They ran with speechless joy; the tender scene
Affected every heart, and the rough soldier,
Unused to melting sympathy, forgot
His ruthless nature, and dissolved in tears.
Eliz. Sweet reconcilement! then, Elizabeth,
Thou didst not plead in vain; but, say, how brooked
The haughty queen this unexpected change?
Suff. Abashed, confounded, for a while she strove
To stem the torrent, but in vain; then fled
Precipitate.

Eliz. But where, O where's my Warwick ?
Suff. With a few chosen squadrons he pursues
The disappointed Margaret.
Eliz. O my fears !
I know not why, but at that hateful name
I tremble ever; my foreboding heart
Presages something dreadful.
Suff. Do not vex
Thy tender mind with visionary dangers.
Eliz. O ! would to Heaven, that he were sheltered here,
And safe within these arms !
Suff. Be not alarmed:
He is the care of Heaven; all good men love,
All bad ones fear him.
Eliz. Such superior merit
Must have a thousand foes, the constant mark
Of envy's poisoned darts.
Suff. There Suffolk feels
The keen reproach; with blushes I confess
There was a time, when, urged by fond ambition,
I looked on Warwick with a jealous eye:
But this last noble deed hath won my heart,
And I am now a convert to his virtues;
But see, the king approaches.

Enter King EDWARD.

Edw. Health and peace,
And happiness to fair Elizabeth !
Thou art no stranger to the joyful news;
The lustre of those speaking eyes declares it.
Eliz. Suffolk, even now, hath blessed me with the tidings.
Edw. Oh ! 'tis amazement all: Elizabeth,
When last we met, thou wert the suppliant; now
'Tis I must ask forgiveness; I, who injured
The dearest, best of men. Oh ! thou hast saved
Edward from shame, and England from destruction.
Eliz. Did I not say my Warwick would be just?
Edw. Thou didst, and on those beauteous lips fair truth
And soft persuasion dwell; long time he stood
Inflexible, and, deaf to friendship's voice,
Listened to nought but all-subduing love.
In after-times, thy name shall be enrolled
Amongst the great deliverers of their country.
Eliz. I have no title to the lavish praise
Thy generous heart bestows; I only said
What duty prompted, and what love inspired;
Indulgent Heaven has crowned it with success.
Edw. Thou hast done all: I am indebted to thee
For more, much more, than I can e'er repay.
Long time, with shame I own, hath Warwick soared
Above me, but I will not be outdone
For ever by this proud aspiring rival:
Poor as I am, there yet is one way left
To pay the debt of gratitude I owe him,
One great reward for such exalted virtues;
Thyself, Elizabeth.
Eliz. What means my lord,
My royal master?
Edw. Yes; when next we meet,
I will bestow it on him, will resign
All my fond claim to happiness and thee;
Though thy dear image ne'er can be effaced
From Edward's breast, though still I doat upon thee,
Though I could hang for ever on thy beauties,
Yet will I yield them to their rightful lord;
Warwick has earned, Warwick alone deserves them.
Eliz. Would he were here to thank thee for this goodness !
Know, generous prince, Elizabeth has long
Admired thy virtues, and, could love admit
Of a divided heart, the noble Edward
Would share it with his friend.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My royal liege,
The rebels are dispersed, queen Margaret's son
Was slain in the pursuit, and she——
Edw. I hope
Secured——
Mess. Is taken prisoner, and will soon
Be here——
Edw. But where's lord Warwick?
Mess. Sir—the queen.

Enter MARGARET, *Prisoner.*

Marg. Once more I am your prisoner.
Edw. 'Twill be prudent
Henceforth to keep you so.
Marg. You dare not !
Thou think'st, perhaps, that I shall sue to thee
For mercy: no; in Margaret of Anjou,
Thou seest the wife, and daughter of a king.
A spirit not to be subdued; though fallen,
Triumphant still; and, though a prisoner, free.
For know, I bear a mind above the reach
Of fortune or of Edward——I have lost
All I could wish to live for, in my child;
And gained, what most I wished to gain, revenge!
Or life or death are now indifferent to me.
Edw. For thy unbounded goodness, power supreme,
Accept our praise!
Eliz. [*Kneeling.*] Accept our humble prayer!
Marg. Insulting piety! the common trick
Of hypocrites and slaves: when ye shall know
What Margaret knows, ye may not be so thankful.
Methinks 'tis pity Warwick is not here
To join in your devotion.
Eliz. Would to Heaven
He were!
Marg. That monster, that perfidious slave,
Who broke his faith to Margaret, and to thee!
Thy coward soul, unable to defend
The treasure thou hadst stolen, could meanly stoop
To court the traitor whom thou dar'st not punish.
Not so the injured Margaret—she repelled
The wrongs she felt, and the deceiver met

The fate he merited.
Edw. What fate? even now,
Crown'd with immortal wreaths, the hero comes
To bless his friends, and punish guilt like thine.
Marg. Proud and deluded wretches! I look down
With pity on you: captive as I am,
'Tis mine to judge and punish; be it yours
To hear and tremble.
Edw. Ha!
Eliz. What can this mean?
Marg. If I mistake not, Warwick is your friend,
Your lover too, I think.
Eliz. My lord, my husband.
Marg. Know then, that friend, that lover, perjured Warwick,
Hath not an hour to live.
Edw. What murtherous hand——
Marg. Mine, tyrant, mine: think not I mean to hide
The noble deed: it is my happiness,
It is my glory: thou wilt call me base,
Blood-thirsty, cruel, savage, and revengeful.
But here I stand acquitted to myself,
And every feeling heart that knows my wrongs.
To late posterity, dethroned queens,
And weeping mothers, shall applaud my justice.
Edw. Justice! on whom?
Marg. Can Edward ask me? Who
Imprisoned Henry, robbed me of a crown,
And placed it on a proud usurper's head?
Who gave his sacred promise to a queen,
And broke it? Who—for which indignant Heaven
Chastised him—basely murthered my sweet boy?
Bereft of honour, fortune, husband, child,
Deprived of every comfort, what remained
For me but vengeance, what for him but death?
Edw. What hast thou done? When? Where! Speak, murtheress, speak!
Marg. Pressed by surrounding multitudes, and made
A slave, they dragged me to the conqueror's tent;
There the first horrid object I beheld,
Was the pale corpse of my poor bleeding child:
There, as the insulting Warwick stood, and seemed
To triumph o'er him—from my breast I drew
A poniard forth, and plunged it in his heart.
The astonished soldiers thronged around him, seized
And brought me here——now to your prayers again. [ELIZABETH *faints.*
Edw. She faints, good Suffolk; help there! help! support!
Assist her. Lead her in. [*Exit* ELIZABETH.
If it be true,
As much I fear it is, a thousand deaths
Were punishment too little for thy guilt;
Thou shalt be tortured.
Marg. Tyrant, I defy thee!
Thy threats appal not me: prepare your tortures!
Let them be sharp and cruel as thyself,
All that ingenious malice can suggest,
Or power inflict, 'twill be my comfort still,
They cannot be so great as those you feel.
Edw. Guards, take the monster hence! let her be chained
In some deep dungeon, dark as her own thoughts,
There let her perish—hence, away with her!
Marg. Despair and horror visit thee——farewell——
He comes, my triumph is complete; look there! [*Exit.*

Enter WARWICK, *leaning on two Soldiers.*

Warw. Where is he? Lead me, lead me to my king.
Edw. My Warwick! my preserver! she shall bleed
For this in every vein.
Warw. Think not of her,
She has no power to hurt thee! and with guilt
Like her's, 'tis punishment enough to live:
This is no time for vengeance; death comes on
With hasty strides—'tis but a little while—
A few short moments, and we part for ever.
My friend—
Edw. I am not worthy of the name,
For I disgraced, dishonoured, murdered thee;
Edward's unkindness was the cause of all:
Canst thou forgive me?
Warw. O! may Warwick's crimes
Ne'er meet forgiveness from offended Heaven,
If from my soul I do not pardon, love,
And honour thee!
Edw. Away, let me support him!
'Tis the last office I shall e'er perform
For thee, my Warwick—Wilt thou lean upon me,
And seal my pardon with one kind embrace?
Warw. We never hated.
Edw. But my love was blind.
Warw. And blinder my resentment.
Edw. I forgot
Thy services.
Warw. And I remembered not
Thou wert my king——My sweet Elizabeth,
Where is she! Edward, do not keep her from me;
We are no rivals now.
Edw. Shocked at the news
Of thy untimely fate, she sunk beneath it,
And fainted in these arms: I seized the occasion,
And bade her weeping maidens bear her hence:
This would have been a dreadful sight indeed.
Eliz. [*Without.*] I can, I will support it.
Warw. Ha? that voice——
Sure 'tis Elizabeth's!

Enter ELIZABETH.

Eliz. O! give me way,
For I must see him—O! my Warwick!
Warw. O!
This is too much! the bitterness of death
Is to be severed thus from those we love.
Edw. Why would you bring her here? [*To the Attendants.*

Warw. Elizabeth,
Be comforted.
Eliz. O no, it is my doom
Never to taste of joy or comfort more:
No; from this hateful world will I retire,
And mourn my Warwick's fate, imploring Heaven,
That I may soon wear out my little store
Of hopeless days, and join thee in the tomb.
Warw. That must not be: I've done my friend a wrong,
And only thou canst make atonement for it.
Thy hand, Elizabeth; if e'er thou loved'st,
Observe me now—thine, Edward. For my sake
Cherish this beauteous mourner, take her from me,
As the last present of a dying friend.
Edw. If aught could make the precious gift more dear,
It would be, Warwick, that it came from thee.
O! I will guard her with a parent's care
From every ill, watch over and protect her;
And, when the memory of thee shall awake,
As oft it will, her poignant griefs, repel
The rising sigh, wipe off the flowing tear,
And strive to charm her to forgetfulness.
Warw. Wilt thou indeed? Then I shall die in peace.
Eliz. Yet thou mayst live.
Warw. Impossible: I feel
The hand of death press cold upon my heart,
And all will soon be o'er; I have lived to save
My falling country, to repent my crimes,
Redeem my honour, and restore my king.
Edw. Alas! my friend, the memory of thee
Will poison every bliss.
Warw. All healing time,
That closes every wound, shall pour its balm
O'er thine. Meanwhile, remember Warwick's fate.
I gave my word to Margaret, and broke it;
Heaven is not to be mocked, it soon o'ertakes us,
And in our crime we meet our punishment.
O, Edward! if thou hop'st that length of days,
And fair prosperity, shall crown thy wishes,
Beware of passion and resentment; make
Thy people's good and happiness thy own;
Discourage faction, banish flatterers, keep
Thy faith inviolate, and reign in peace.
I can no more—My love! Have mercy, Heaven!
[*Dies.*
Edw. He's gone!———
Eliz. And with him all my hopes of bliss.
Edw. Let every honour, to a soldier due,
Attend the hero to his tomb—meanwhile,
Deep in the living tablet of my heart,
Will I engrave thy words—illustrious shade!
Living, thou wert my counsellor and friend,
And, dead, I will remember and obey thee.
Eliz. Warwick, farewell! I shall not long survive thee.
Edw. I hope thou wilt—Elizabeth, remember
His dying charge, think on thy promise given.
Thou shalt remain with me, with me lament
Our common benefactor; we will sit
And talk together of my Warwick's virtues,
For I will try to emulate them all,
And learn, by copying him, to merit thee.
His great example shall inspire my breast
With patriot zeal, shall teach me to subdue
The power of faction, vanquish party rage,
And make me, what alone I wish to be,
The happy king of an united people.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

BY GARRICK.—SPOKEN BY MRS YATES.

Exhausted quite with prisons, racks, and death,
Permit me here to take a little breath!
You who have seen my actions, known their springs,
Say, are we women such insipid things?
Say, lords of the creation, mighty men!
In what have you surpassed us? where? and when?
I come to know for whom the palm is due,
To us weak vessels, or to stronger you?
Against your conquering swords, I draw——my fan,
Come on!—now parry Marg'ret, if you can.
Stand up, ye boasters! [*To the Pit*] don't there sneaking sit;
Are you for pleasure, politics, or wit?
The Boxes smile to see me scold the Pit.
Their turn is next——And, though I will not wrong 'em,
A woful havoc there will be among 'em——
You, our best friends, [*To the Pit*] love, cherish, and respect us;
Not take our fortunes, marry and neglect us.
You think indeed that as you please, you rule us;
And with a strange importance often school us,
Yet let each citizen describe a brother,
I'll tell you what you say of one another:
"My neighbour leads, poor soul, a woful life,
A worthy man, but govern'd by his wife!"
How say you? what, all silent?——then 'tis true:
We rule the city—Now, great sirs, to you.
[*To the Boxes.*

What is your boast?—Would you, like me, have done,
To free a captive wife, or save a son?
Rather than run such danger of your lives,
You'd leave your children, and lock up your wives.
When with your noblest deeds a nation rings,
You are but puppets, and we play the strings.
We plan no battles—true—but those of sight,
Crack goes the fan, and armies halt or fight!
You have th' advantage, ladies, wisely reap it,
And let me hint the only way to keep it.
Let men of vain ideas have their fill,
Frown, bounce, stride, strut,—while you, with happy skill,
Like anglers, use the finest golden thread;
Give line enough—nor check the tugging head:
The fish will flounder—you with gentle hand,
And soft degrees, must bring the trout to land:
A more specific nostrum cannot be——
Probatum est—and never fails with *Me*.

MATILDA.

BY

FRANKLIN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MORCAR, *Earl of Mercia.*
EDWIN, *Earl of Northumberland.*
SIWARD, *Morcar's Friend.*
Officers, &c.

WOMEN.

MATILDA, *a Prisoner in the Camp of Morcar.*
BERTHA, *her Friend.*

SCENE,—*Morcar's Camp and the Environs, near Nottingham.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—MATILDA'S *Tent, with a View of the distant Country.*

MATILDA, BERTHA.

Mat. I thank thee, gentle Bertha, for thy goodness;
If aught could sooth the anguish of my soul,
Or raise it, from the horrors of despair,
To hope and joy, 'twould be thy generous friendship:
But I am sunk so deep in misery,
That comfort cannot reach me.
Ber. Talk not thus,
My sweet Matilda; innocence, like thine,
Must be the care of all-directing Heaven.
Already hath the interposing hand
Of Providence redeemed thee from the rage
Of savage war, and sheltered thee within
This calm asylum. Mercia's potent earl,
The noble Morcar, will protect thy virtues;
And, if I err not, wishes but to share
His conquests with thee.
Mat. O my friend, oft times,
The flowery path, that tempts our wandering steps,
But leads to misery; what thou fondly deem'st
My soul's best comfort, is its bitterest woe.
Earl Morcar loves me. To the generous mind
The heaviest debt is that of gratitude,
When 'tis not in our power to repay it.
Ber. Oft have I heard thee say, to him thou ow'st
Thy honour and thy life.
Mat. I told thee truth.
Beneath my father's hospitable roof
I spent my earlier, happier days, in peace
And safety: When the Norman conqueror came,
Discord, thou know'st, soon lit her fatal torch,
And spread destruction o'er this wretched land.
The loyal Ranulph flew to William's aid,
And left me to a faithful peasant's care,
Who lived, sequestered, in the fertile plains
Of rich Northumbria; There, awhile, I dwelt
In sweet retirement, when the savage Malcolm
Rushed on our borders.
Ber. I remember well

The melancholy hour. Confusion raged
On every side, and desolation spread
Its terrors round us. How didst thou escape?
Mat. A crew of desperate ruffians seized upon me,
A helpless prey: For, O! he was not there,
Who best could have defended his Matilda.
Then had I fallen a wretched sacrifice
To brutal rage, and lawless violence,
Had not the generous Morcar interposed
To save me: Though he joined the guilty cause
Of foul rebellion, yet his soul abhorred
Such violation. At his awful voice,
The surly ruffians left me, and retired.
He bore me, half expiring, in his arms,
Back to his tent; with every kind attention
There strove to sooth my griefs, and promised, soon
As fit occasion offered, to restore me
To my afflicted father.
Ber. Something, sure,
Was due to generous Morcar for his aid,
So timely given.
Mat. No doubt: But mark what followed.
In my deliverer, too soon I found
An ardent lover, sighing at my feet.
Ber. And what is there the proudest of our sex
Could wish for more? To be the envied bride
Of noble Morcar, first of England's peers
In fame and fortune.
Mat. Never trust, my Bertha,
To outward shew. 'Tis not the smiles of fortune,
The pomp of wealth, or splendour of a court,
Can make us happy. In the mind alone
Rests solid joy, and true felicity,
Which I can never taste: For, oh, my friend!
A secret sorrow weighs upon my heart.
Ber. Then pour it in the bosom of thy friend;
Let me partake it with thee.
Mat. Generous maid!
Know, then, for nought will I conceal from thee,
honour Mercia's earl, revere his virtues,
And wish I could repay him with myself:
But, blushing, I acknowledge it, the heart
His vows solicit, is not mine to give.
Ber. Has, then, some happier youth——
Mat. Another time
'll tell thee all the story of our loves.
But, oh, my Bertha! didst thou know to whom
My virgin faith is plighted, thou wouldst say
am, indeed, unhappy.
Ber. Could Matilda
Bestow the treasure of her heart on one
Unworthy of her choice?
Mat. Unworthy! No.
glory in my passion for the best,
The loveliest of his sex. Oh! he was all
That bounteous nature, prodigal of charms,
Did on her choicest favourite e'er bestow.
His graceful form, and sweet deportment, spoke
The fairer beauties of his kindred soul,
Where every grace and every virtue shone.
But thou wilt tremble, Bertha, when I tell thee,
He is earl Morcar's brother.
Ber. Ha! his brother!
The noble Edwin! Often have I heard
My father——
Mat. Did lord Edrick know him, then?
Ber. He knew his virtues, and his fame in arms,
And often would lament the dire effects
Of civil discord, that could thus dissolve
The ties of nature, and of brethren make
The bitterest foes. If right I learn, lord Edwin
Is William's firmest friend, and still supports
His royal master.
Mat. Yes, my Bertha, there
I still find comfort: Edwin ne'er was stained,
As Morcar is, with foul disloyalty,
But stands betwixt his sovereign and the rage
Of rebel multitudes, to guard his throne.
If, nobly fighting in his country's cause,
My hero falls, I shall not weep alone;
The king, he loved and honoured, will lament him,
And grateful England mix her tears with mine.
Ber. And doth earl Morcar know of Edwin's love?
Mat. Oh, no! I would not, for a thousand worlds,
He should suspect it, lest his fiery soul
Should catch the alarm, and kindle to a flame,
That might destroy us all.
Ber. I know his warmth
And vehemence of temper; unrestrained
By laws, and spurning at the royal power,
Which he contemns, he rules despotic here.
Mat. Alas! how man from man, and brother oft
From brother, differs! Edwin's tender passion
Is soft and gentle, as the balmy breath
Of vernal zephyrs; whilst the savage north,
That curls the angry ocean into storms,
Is a faint image of earl Morcar's love:
'Tis rage, 'tis fury all. When last we met,
He knit his angry brow, and frowned severe
Upon me; then, with wild distracted look,
Bade me beware of trifling with his passion,
He would not brook it—trembling I retired,
And bathed my couch in tears.
Ber. Unhappy maid!
But time, that softens every human woe,
Will bring some blest event, and lighten thine.
Mat. Alas! thou know'st not what it is to love.
Haply thy tender heart hath never felt
The tortures of that soul-bewitching passion.
Its joys are sweet and poignant; but its pangs
Are exquisite, as I have known too well:
For, oh, my Bertha! since the fatal hour
When Edwin left me, never hath sweet peace,
That used to dwell, with all its comforts, here,
E'er deigned to visit this afflicted breast.
Ber. Too plain, alas! I read thy sorrows; grief
Sits in sad triumph on thy faded cheek,
And half obscures the lustre of thy beauties.
Mat. Talk not of beauty, 'tis our sex'an,
And leads but to destruction. I abhor
The fatal gift. Oh! would it had pleased Heaven
To brand my homely features with the mark
Of foul deformity, or let me pass

Unknown, and undistinguished from the herd
Of vulgar forms, save by the partial eye
Of my loved Edwin; then had I been blest
With charms unenvied, and a guiltless love.
Ber. Where is thy Edwin now?
Mat. Alas! I know not.
'Tis now three years, since last these eyes beheld
Their dearest object. In that humble vale,
Whence, as I told thee, Malcolm's fury drove me,
There first we met. Oh! how I cherish still
The fond remembrance! There we first exchanged
Our mutual vows; the day of happiness
Was fixt; it came, and in a few short hours
He had been made indissolubly mine,
When fortune, envious of our happiness,
And William's danger, called him to the field.
Ber. And since that parting have ye never met?
Mat. O never, Bertha, never but in thought.
Imagination, kind anticipator
Of love's pleasures, brings us oft together.
Oft as I sit within my lonely tent,
And cast my wishful eyes o'er yonder plain,
In every passing traveller I strive
To trace his image, hear his lovely voice
In every sound, and fain would flatter me
Edwin still lives, still loves his lost Matilda.
Ber. Who knows but fate, propitious to thy love,
May guide him hither?
Mat. Gracious heaven forbid!
Consider, Bertha, if the chance of war
Should this way lead him, he must come in arms
Against his brother: Oh! 'tis horrible
To think on. Should they meet, and Edwin fall,
What shall support me? And if victory smiles
Upon my love, how dear will be the purchase
By Morcar's blood! Then must I lose my friend,
My guardian, my protector—every way
Matilda must be wretched.
Ber. Is there aught
In Bertha's power?
Mat. Wilt thou dispatch, my friend,
Some trusty messenger with these?—Away.
[*Gives her letters.*
I'll meet thee in my tent—Farewell.
[*Exit* BERTHA.
Mean time,
One hope remains, the generous Siward—he
Might save me still. His sympathetic heart
Can feel for the afflicted.—I have heard,
(Such is the magic power of sacred friendship)
When the impetuous Morcar scatters fear
And terror round him, he, and he alone,
Can stem the rapid torrent of his passion,
And bend him, though reluctant, to his will——
And see, in happy hour, he comes this way.
Now fortune, be propitious! if there be,
As I have heard, an eloquence in grief,
And those can most persuade, who are most wretched,
I shall not pass unpitied.]

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Ha! in tears,
Matilda! What new grief, what cruel foe
To innocence and beauty, thus could vex
Thy gentle spirit!
Mat. Canst thou ask the cause,
When thou behold'st me still in shameful bonds,
A wretched captive, friendless and forlorn,
Without one ray of hope to sooth my sorrows?
Siw. Can she, whose beauteous form and fair demeanour
Charm every eye, and conquer every heart,
Can she be wretched? can she want a friend,
Whom Siward honours, and whom Morcar loves?
Oh! if thou knew'st with what unceasing ardour,
What unexampled tenderness and truth,
He doats upon thee, sure thou might'st be wrought
At least to pity.
Mat. Urge no more, my lord,
The ungrateful subject; but too well I know
How much thy friend deserves, how much, alas,
I owe him!—If it be earl Morcar's wish
To make me happy, why am I detained
A prisoner here; spite of his solemn promise
He would restore me to my royal master,
Or send me back to the desiring arms
Of the afflicted Ranulph, who, in tears
Of bitterest anguish, mourns his long-lost daughter?
Surely, my lord, it ill becomes a soldier
To forfeit thus his honour and his word.
Siw. I own it; yet the cause pleads strongly for him.
If, by thy own too powerful charms misled,
He deviates from the paths of rigid honour,
Matilda might forgive. Thou know'st he lives
But in thy smiles; his love-enchanted soul
Hangs on those beauties, he would wish to keep
For ever in his sight.
Mat. Indulgent Heaven
Keep me for ever from it! Oh, my lord!
If e'er thy heart with generous pity glowed
For the distressed; if e'er thy honest zeal
Could boast an influence o'er the man you love
Oh! now exert thy power, assist, direct,
And save thy friend from ruin and Matilda.
There are, my lord, who most offend, where most
They wish to please. Such often is the fate
Of thy unhappy friend, when he pours forth
His ardent soul in vows of tenderest passion;
'Tis with such rude and boisterous violence,
As suits but ill the hero or the lover.
Siw. I know his weakness, know his follies all
And feel them but too well: He loves with transport,
And hates with fury. Warmed with fierce desire
Or strong resentment, his impetuous soul
Is hurried on, till reason quits her seat,
And passion takes the loosely-flowing rein;
Then all is rage, confusion, and despair.
And yet, when cool reflection hath removed
The veil of error, he will weep his faults

With such a sweet contrition, as would melt
The hardest heart to pity and forgiveness.
Oh! he has virtues that may well atone
For all his venial rashness, that deserve
A sovereign's love, and claim a nation's praise;
Virtues, that merit happiness and thee.
Why wilt thou thus despise my noble friend?
His birth and fortune, with the rank he bears
Among the first of England's peers, will raise thee
As far above thy sex, in wealth and power,
As now thou art in beauty.
Mat. Oh, my lord!
'Tis not the pride, the luxury of life,
The splendid robe and glittering gem, that knits
The lasting bonds of mutual happiness:
Where manners differ, where affections jar,
And will not kindly mix together, where
The sweet harmonious concord of the mind
Is wanting, all is misery and woe.
Siw. By Heaven! thou plead'st thy own and virtue's cause,
With such bewitching eloquence, the more
Thy heart, alarmed by diffidence, still urges
Against this union with my friend, the more
I wish to see him blest with worth like thine.
Mat. My lord, it must not be; for grant him all
The fair perfections you already see,
And I could wish to find, there is a bar
That must for ever disunite us—Born
Of Norman race, and from my earliest years
Attached to William's cause, I love my king,
And wish my country's peace: That king, my lord,
Whom Morcar wishes to dethrone; that peace,
Which he destroys: Had he an angel's form,
With all the virtues that adorn his sex,
With all the riches fortune can bestow,
I would not wed a traitor.
Siw. Call not his errors by so harsh a name;
He has been deeply wronged, and souls, like his,
Must feel the wounds of honour, and resent them.
Alas! with thee I weep my country's fate,
Nay wish, perhaps, as well to William's cause,
And England's peace, as can the loyal daughter
Of gallant Ranulph; and would, therefore, joy
To see Matilda lend a gracious ear
To Morcar's suit. Thy reconciling charms
Might sooth his troubled soul, might heal the wounds
Of bleeding England, and unite us all
In one bright chain of harmony and love.
The gallant Edwin too——
Mat. Ha! what of him?
Know'st thou that noble youth?
Siw. So many years
Have past since last we met, by different views
And our unhappy feuds so long divided,
I should not recollect him; but report
Speaks loudly of his virtues. He, no doubt,
If yet he lives——
Mat. Yet lives! why, what, my lord?
Siw. You seem much moved.
Mat. Forgive me, but whene'er
This sad idea rises to my mind,
Of brother against brother armed, my soul
Recoils with horror.
Siw. 'Tis a dreadful thought:
Would I could heal that cruel breach! but then,
Thou might'st do much; the task is left for thee.
Mat. For me? Alas! it is not in my power.
Siw. In thine, and thine alone. O think, Matilda!
How great thy glory, and how great thy praise,
To be the blessed instrument of peace;
The band of union 'twixt contending brothers.
Thou see'st them, now, like two descending floods,
Whose rapid torrents meeting, half o'erwhelm
The neighbouring plains: thy gentle voice might still
The angry waves, and bid their waters flow,
In one united stream, to bless the land.
Mat. That flattering thought beams comfort on my soul
Amidst my sorrows; bear me witness, Heaven!
Could poor Matilda be the happy means
Of reconcilement; could these eyes behold
The noble youths embracing and embraced
In the firm cords of amity and love,
Oh! it would make me ample recompense
For all my griefs, nor would I more complain,
But rest me in the silent grave, well pleased
To think, at last, I had not lived in vain.
Siw. Cherish that virtuous thought, illustrious maid!
And let me hope my friend may still be happy.
Mat. I wish it from my soul: but see, my lord,
Earl Morcar comes this way, with hasty steps,
Across the lawn. I must retire: farewell!
You'll not forget my humble suit.
Siw. Oh! no.
I will do all that loveliest innocence
And worth, like thine, deserve. Farewell: mean time,
Remember, Siward's every wish, the bliss
Of Morcar, Edwin's life, the public peace,
And England's welfare, all depend on thee.
[*Exit* MATILDA.
There's no alternative but this; my friend
Must quit Matilda, or desert the cause
We have lavishly promised to support—perhaps
The last were best——both shall be tried——he comes.

Enter MORCAR.

Mor. O Siward! was not that
The fair Matilda, whom you parted from?
Siw. It was.
Mor. What says she! the dear, cruel maid!
Is she still deaf? inexorable still?
Siw. You must not think of her.
Mor. What say'st thou, Siward?
Not think of her!
Siw. No. Root her from thy heart,
And gaze no more. I blush to see my friend
So lost to honour: Is it for a man
On whom the fate of England may depend,

To quit the dangerous post, where duty calls,
And all the business of the war, to sigh
And whine in corners for a captive woman?
Resume the hero, Morcar, and subdue
This idle passion.
Mor. Talk not thus of love,
The great refiner of the human heart,
The source of all that's great, of all that's good;
Of joy, of pleasure—if it be a weakness,
It is a weakness, which the best have felt.
I would not wish to be a stranger to it.
Siw. Let me entreat thee, if thou valu'st life,
Or fame, or honour, quit Matilda.
Mor. Yes;
I thank you for your counsel. 'Tis the advice
Of cold unfeeling wisdom, kindly meant
To make me prudent, and to leave me wretched:
But thus it is, that proud exulting health
Is ever ready to prescribe a cure
For pain and sickness, which it never knew.
Siw. There, too, thou err'st; for I have known its joys
And sorrows too. In early life, I lost
The partner of my soul. E'er since that hour,
I bade adieu to love, and taught my soul
To offer her devotions at the shrine
Of sacred friendship; there my vows are paid:
Morcar best knows the idol of my worship.
Mor. I know and love thee for it: but Oh! my friend,
I cannot force this tyrant from my breast;
E'en now I feel her here, she sits enthroned
Within the foldings of my heart, and he,
Who tears her thence, must draw the life-blood from me.
My morning slumbers, and my midnight dreams,
Are haunted by Matilda.
Siw. To be thus
The slave of one, that scorns thee! Oh! 'tis base,
Mean, and unworthy of thee.
Mor. I will bear
That scorn no longer: thou hast roused me, Siward;
I will enjoy the glorious prize; she's mine,
By right of conquest, mine. I will assert
A victor's claim, and force her to be happy.
Siw. That must not be. It ill becomes the man,
Who takes up arms against a tyrant's power,
To adopt a tyrant's maxims; force and love
Are terms, that never can be reconciled.
You will not, must not, do it.
Mor. Must not! who
Shall dare oppose me?
Siw. Honour, conscience, love,
The sense of shame, your virtue, and your friend.
Whilst I have life, or power, I will not see
Matilda wronged.
Mor. You are her champion, then,
It seems, her favoured, happy friend, perhaps
Her fond admirer, too. Ill-fated Morcar!
I see it but too well. I am lost, abandoned;
Alike betrayed by friendship, and by love.
I thank you, sir, you have performed your office,
And merit your reward.
Siw. Unkind reproach!
Did I for this desert my sovereign's cause,
My peaceful home, and all its joys, to serve
Ungrateful Morcar? Why did I rebel?
The haughty William never injured me.
For thee alone I fought, for thee I conquered;
And, but for thee, long since I had employed
My gallant soldiers to a nobler purpose,
Than loitering, thus, in idle camp, to hear
A love-sick tale, and sooth a madman's phrenzy.
Mor. You could? Away, and leave me, then: withdraw
Your boasted aid, and bid Northumbria's sons
Bend to the tyrant's yoke, whilst I alone
Defend the cause of freedom and my country.
Here let us part. Remove your loiterers,
And join the usurper.
Siw. Mark the difference, now,
Betwixt blind passion and undaunted friendship:
You are impatient of the keen reproof,
Because you merit: I can bear it all,
Because I've not deserved it.

Enter an Officer.

Of. Good my lords,
Forgive this rough intrusion; but the danger,
I trust, will plead my pardon. As I watched
From yonder tower, a dusky cloud appeared,
As if from distant troops, advancing; soon
I saw their armour glitter in the sun;
With rapid motion they approached; each moment
We must expect them here.
Siw. Why, let them come!
Already I have ordered fit disposal
Of all our little force. Away, good Osmond,
Be silent and be ready. [*Exit Officer.*
Now, my friend,
Thou art as welcome to thy Siward's breast,
As dear as ever. When the man I love
Walks in the paths of error, I reprove him
With honest freedom; but when danger comes
Upon him, I forget his faults, and flee
With all a lover's ardour to his rescue;
His sorrows and his wants alone remembered,
And all his follies buried in oblivion.
Mor. Thou hast disarmed me now. This pierces more
Than all the bitter poison of reproach,
Which thou hast poured upon me. Oh! 'twas treason
Against the sacred majesty of friendship,
To doubt thy honour, or suspect thy virtue:
Thou wilt forgive: but, when the wounded mind
Is torn with passion, every touch is pain;
You should not probe so deeply.
Siw. 'Twas my duty.
But come, no more of that. The foe advances.
If we succeed, as my prophetic soul
Foretells we shall—I have some comfort for you—
If not, we'll borrow courage from despair,
And die like men. Thou stand'st upon the rock
Of danger, and the yawning precipice
Opens before us; I will snatch thee from it,
Or leap the gulf, and perish with my friend.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Fortress belonging to* MORCAR.

EDWIN *alone (in chains.)*

Edw. IT is the will of Heaven, and must be done.
The hard-fought field is lost, and here I am
A prisoner in my brother's camp: alas!
That fortune thus should guide me to a foe,
Whom most I wished to shun! We little thought
The troops, by Morcar led, had this way bent
Their ill-directed course: but Providence
Hath so ordained, perhaps, to heal the wounds
Of civil discord. Oh! unhappy Edwin,
For what art thou reserv'd? No matter what.
Since fate deprived me of my dear Matilda,
Whom I for three long years have sought in vain,
Life hath been irksome to me: this, perchance,
May end it—for, who knows, if nature yet
May live within the conqueror's breast, to plead
A brother's pardon! Yet he knows me not,
But soon he must—ha! who comes here? earl Siward!
The second in command, to whom, o'erpowered
By circling foes, and fainting with my wounds,
I yielded up my sword. If fame say true,
He bears a mind too great to look with scorn
On the oppressed, or triumph o'er misfortune.

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Stranger, whoe'er thou art, be comforted;
Thy fate hath thrown thee into noble hands,
Who know thy merit. May I ask thy name?
Edw. I am a poor abandoned wretch, the sport
Of fortune; one, whose least affliction is
To be a captive, and from every eye
Would wish to hide the story of my fate:
Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.
Siw. Respect is ever due to misery:
I will not urge thee further; all, I hope,
That generous pity could afford to sooth
Calamity, like thine, by my command,
Hath been extended to thee. Here, awhile,
You must remain a prisoner. But, ere long,
I hope to greet thee by a fairer name,
And rank thee as our friend.
Edw. Your generous orders
Have been obeyed, and I acknowledge it
With grateful heart. May I not ask the fate
Of him, who fought so nobly by my side,
That brave old man?
Siw. The gallant Ranulph——
Edw. Yes;
My fellow captive.
Siw. He is safe and free.
Edw. Ha! free! Thank Heaven!
Siw. The generous Morcar, urged
By my entreaties, pardoned and released him,
Though much our soldiers murmured, and demanded
His life and your's; a sacrifice, they said,
Due to the manes of their slaughtered friends;
But mercy has prevailed.
Edw. Whate'er becomes
Of an unhappy wanderer, like me,
For your kind treatment of the aged Ranulph,
Accept my thanks; it was a precious boon;
Morcar may find me not unworthy of it.
To-day I am his captive, but to-morrow
May see me his deliverer: for, know,
My royal master, the victorious William,
With eagle swiftness, soon will follow me
With twenty times your force. As this shall prove
Or true or false, so deal with me; remember
I warned you of it.
Siw. And remember thou,
That I with joy receive the welcome news:
Welcome to me, for I am William's friend.
Edw. Thou canst not then be mine, or England's foe:
With such a heart as thine, so nobly formed
To feel for the afflicted, satisfied,
For so thou seem'st, of William's royal right,
What could engage thee in this foul revolt,
This base rebellion?
Siw. What, but the great bond
Of kindred souls, inviolable friendship!
The only solid bliss on this side heaven,
That doubles all the joys of human life,
And, by dividing, lessens every woe.
Edw. Who knows but this day's sad event may prove
The happy means to heal a nation's wounds,
And sooth our jarring factions into peace?
Siw. Had Morcar thought with me, long since that end
Had been obtained; but Morcar is——
Edw. Inexorable;
So I have heard, and therefore little hope
To change his nature. O! could he be wrought
To sweet oblivion of his wrongs; to bury
His deep resentment; mine should be the task,
A task, Heaven knows, I would, with joy, perform,
To reconcile offended majesty;
To soften all his errors, plead his pardon,
And give my sovereign one brave soldier more.
Siw. When next we meet I trust it shall be so:
Mean time, let me prepare him for the change;
Retire a while—ere long we'll send for thee,
For every moment I expect him here;
Thy freedom and thy happiness shall be
My first concern, for thou hast well deserved it.
Edw. Farewell! Be quick in your resolves; the time
Requires it; and be wise ere 'tis too late.
[*Exit* EDWIN.
Siw. [*Alone.*] I hope we shall. This well-timed victory,

If rightly used, may smooth our way to peace.
Now, Morcar, all thy happiness depends
Upon thyself alone. Now, friendship, raise
Thy powerful voice, and force him to be happy.
He will, he must—he comes——

Enter MORCAR.

Siw. My conqueror, welcome!
Mor. Thrice welcome to my arms, my noble Siward;
At length we meet in joy; the day is ours;
Thanks to thy friendly aid.
Siw. We must not boast;
'Twas hardly purchased, and has cost us dear:
You followed them too close.
Mor. I own 'twas rash;
My youthful ardour urged the keen pursuit
Too far; and, but for thee, I had been lost.
In war thy arm protects me, and in peace
Thy counsels guide. O! how shall I return
Thy goodness? Thou wert born to save thy friend.
Siw. Away! I'll not be thanked. I've done my duty,
And if thou think'st thyself indebted for it,
Repay me not with flattery, but with love.
E'er since my soul with thine congenial met
In social bands, and marked thee for her own,
Thy interest and thy happiness have been
My first ambition; and when thou art blest
With all thy soul can wish for, Siward, then,
And then alone, will have his full reward.
Mor. O, unexampled faithfulness and truth!
But say, my Siward, is our loss so great?
Siw. The flower of half our troops. But 'tis not now
A time to weep, for I have glorious tidings,
That much import thy happiness.
Mor. Ha! what?
Siw. Know, that amongst our captives, I have ta'en
A noble prize, will make us full amends
For every loss—the gallant Ranulph.
Mor. Ha!
Matilda's father! then I'm satisfied.
The wily chief! by Heaven he shall repay me
For her unkindness: Give him to my rage,
To my resentment, to my injured love.
Where is he, Siward?
Siw. I have set him free.
Mor. Ha! free! Thy ill-timed mercy hath betrayed
Our cause. The tyrant would have ransomed him
With half his kingdom.
Siw. Still thy rapid passions
O'erpower thy reason. What if it should serve
A better purpose; smooth thy paths to bliss,
And gain Matilda for thee!
Mor. O, my friend!
My Siward, do not flatter me: By Heaven,
Her kind consent would give my ravished soul
More true and heart-felt happiness, than could
A thousand victories o'er the proud usurper.
Siw. Know, then, I gave him liberty and life,
On these conditions—That he should withdraw
His powers from William's aid, and never more
Assist his cause; the time would come, I told him,
That he should know to whom he owed the boon,
And how he might repay it.
Mor. That was kind,
Indeed, my Siward; that was like a friend.
O! thou reviv'st my drooping heart; but tell me,
Did my Matilda,—let me call her mine,—
Did she acknowledge, did she thank thee for it?
Siw. O! I assumed no merit; but to thee,
And to thy generous, unexampled love,
Did I attribute all. She sighed, and wept,
Poured forth a thousand blessings on thy head.
Mor. And dost thou think, my Siward, that one ray
Of hope remains?
Siw. The clouds already vanish;
The prospect brightens round thee; haste and seize
The lucky moment. When the generous mind
Is soothed by obligation, soon it opens
To the mild dictates of humanity,
And softens into sympathy and love.
Mor. O, Siward! could'st thou teach me but to win
That lovely maid—
Siw. The task is half performed
Already, and my friend shall soon be blessed.
One thing, and one alone, remains to fix
Her doubtful heart, if yet a doubt remains.
Mor. O! name it, Siward; if 'tis in the power
Of wealth to purchase, or of victory
In the fair field of glory to acquire,
It shall not long be wanting.
Siw. It requires
No price, but such as Morcar well can pay;
No victory, but the victory o'er thyself,
And thy own passions—Give up thy resentment,
Make peace with William, and Matilda's thine.
Mor. Matilda mine! and must I purchase her
At the dear price of honour? with the loss
Of all my soul holds dear, my country's welfare?
My word——
Siw. Away! whilst prudence warranted
Our honest zeal, I was the first to aid
Thy just revenge; but valour ill-advised,
And ill-exerted in a hopeless cause,
Degenerates into rashness. You mistake
The pride of honour for the pride of virtue.
Mor. And would'st thou have me bend beneath the yoke
Of ignominious slavery, quit the cause
Of heaven-born freedom, and betray my friends?
Siw. I'd have thee just and happy—We have been
Successful, let us now be generous,
Whilst we have something to bestow; nor wait
Till fickle fortune from our brows shall tear
The blasted wreath, and leave us nought to give.
Too long already have we sacrificed,
At proud Ambition's altar, to revenge;
Now let us offer at the shrine of peace,
And sacrifice——

Mor. To love, and to Matilda;
It shall be so—the struggle's past—away,
My Siward, haste, and tell her, I obey;
Her laws, her king, her master, shall be mine;
I have no will but her's, and in her eyes
Will read my duty—Yet a moment stay—
What will my brave companions of the war,
My fellow soldiers, say? Will they approve
This unexpected change?

Siw. I know them firm
In their obedience, and resolved to act
As you command—But I will see them straight,
And urge such powerful reasons as may best
Secure them to our purpose. Fare thee well.

Mor. Siward, thy kind anticipating care
Prevents my every wish—But say, my friend,
Where is the gallant chief whom we subdued,
Who fought so hardly, and so nobly fell?

Siw. In yonder tent, a wretched prisoner still;
He counts the tedious hours; a heavy gloom
Sits on his brow, as if some deep-felt sorrow
Oppressed his noble mind—We must release him.

Mor. Thou know'st, my Siward, thrice we had o'erpowered
His troops, and thrice his single valour turned
The fortune of the day: Since first I trod
The paths of glory, ne'er did I behold
Such deeds of valour wrought by mortal hand;
I almost envied, though I conquered him.
He wore his beaver up, nor could I trace
His features; but he bears a noble form:
Know'st thou his quality or name?

Siw. Not yet;
He seems industrious to conceal them both
From every eye.

Mor. Some deity protects him,
As its peculiar care; for, as I raised
My sword against him, whether the soft passion,
That triumphs o'er me, had unmanned my soul,
I know not; but, bereft of all its power,
My nerveless arm dropped ineffectual down,
And let him 'scape me.

Siw. 'Tis most true; I saw
And wondered at it. When you left the field,
With desperate rage he rushed intrepid on,
And seemed to court his fate, till circling foes
Compelled him to resign, and yield his sword.

Mor. Away! I burn with ardour to forgive,
To free, and to embrace him: fly, my Siward.
Let him approach; he could not wish to meet
In happier hour the master of his fate,
For now, methinks, I could be reconciled
To every foe. Away, my Siward, haste
And send him to me.

Siw. Treat him like a friend,
He may be useful. Such distinguished merit
Must have its influence; he commands, no doubt,
The royal ear, and may procure such terms
As William may with honour yield, and we
Without a blush accept. [*Exit* SIWARD.

Mor. Farewell!—And now,
How stands the great account? Can I acquit
Myself, or shall I be condemned before
Thy great tribunal, all-repaying Justice?
But fair Matilda wipes out every stain;
'Tis she commands me to forgive, and she
Must be obeyed; I'm not the first apostate
From honour's cause the tyrant love has made.
My friend too urged the change—

Guards bring in EDWIN *chained.*

He's here—Strike off
Those ignominious chains—he has deserved
A better fate. [*Guards unchain him.*
Stranger, whoe'er thou art, [*Turning to* EDWIN.
Thy gallant bearing in the unequal conflict,
For we had twice thy numbers, hath endeared
A soldier to a soldier. Vulgar minds
To their own party, and the narrow limits
Of partial friendship, meanly may confine
Their admiration; but the brave will see,
And, seeing, praise the virtues of a foe.

Edw. [*Aside.*] O, powerful nature, how thou work'st within me!

Mor. Still silent! still concealed! perchance thou fear'st,
Knowing thy rank and name, I might recal
My promised pardon; but be confident;
For, by that sacred honour, which I hold
Dearer than life, I promise, here, to free
And to protect thee: Didst thou hide from me
My deadliest foe; should William's self appear
Before me, he, who hath so deeply wronged me,
So long opposed; nay, should I hear the voice
Of that adventurous, rash, misguided youth,
Whom yet I cannot hate—my cruel brother,
I could forgive him.

Edw. [*Discovering himself.*] Then—behold him here.

Mor. Edwin! Amazement! By what wondrous means,
Mysterious Providence, dost thou unfold
Thy secret purposes! I little thought,
When last we met, what heaven-protected victim
Escaped my sword.

Edw. With horror I recall
That dreadful circumstance. Throughout the battle
I knew, and carefully avoided thee.

Mor. O, Edwin! how, on this propitious day,
Have victory, fame and friendship, fortune, love
And nature, all conspired to make me blest!
We have been foes too long—Of that no more.
My Edwin, welcome! Once more to thy arms
Receive thy brother.

Edw. Yet a moment stay:
By nature touched, the same accordant string,
That vibrates on thy heart, now beats on mine;
But honour, and the duty, which I owe
The best of kings, restrains the fond embrace
I wish to share, and bids me ask, if yet
In Morcar I behold my sovereign's foe.
If it be so, take back thy proffered freedom,
Take back my forfeit life: I would not wish
To be indebted for it to—a traitor.

Mor. Perhaps I may deserve a better name;
Perhaps I may be changed.

Edw. I hope thou art;

For this I came, for this I yielded to thee,
To tell thee William's strength is every hour
Increasing: if thou mean'st to make thy peace,
Now is the crisis—
Mor. Edwin, stop! nor urge
Such mean unworthy motives as alone
Could thwart my purpose. Morcar cannot fear,
But Morcar can be generous: for, know,
Before I saw thee here, I had resolved
To sheathe my sword, and be the conqueror's friend;
For, O! there is a cause——
Edw. What'er the cause——
The effect is glorious. Now thou art again
My brother. Here, let us once more unite
The long-dissevered cord. [*They embrace.*
Mor. And never more
May blind resentment, faction, party, rage,
Envy, or jealous fear, dissolve the tie!
And now, my Edwin, blushing, I confess,
Not to thy tender care for Morcar's safety,
To friendship's council, or to reason's voice,
Owe we this wished-for change. A female hand
Directs and wills it.
Edw. Ha! a woman!
Mor. Yes,
If such I ought to call that form divine,
Which triumphs here, who rules my every thought,
My every action guides. In yonder tent
A beauteous captive dwells, who hath enslaved
Her conqueror: She demands the sacrifice;
She would not give her hand to William's foe,
And therefore, only, Morcar is his friend.
Edw. I could have wished that this important change
Were to the hero, not the lover, due.
Mor. I am above deceit, and own my weakness;
But thou shalt see her—Yes, my Edwin, thou
Shalt bear the welcome tidings to my love.
Thy presence will bear witness to the change;
Thy freedom, and the joyful news thou bring'st
Of our blest union will confirm it to her.
Wilt thou, my Edwin?—
Edw. Do not ask me what
I must refuse. I would do much to serve
A friend and brother; but a task of joy
Ill suits a soul oppressed with griefs like mine.
O! I could tell thee—but 'twould be unkind,
When thou art entering on the paths of bliss,
To stop thee with my melancholy tale.
Mor. Whate'er thy griefs, I pity, and hereafter
May find the means to lessen or remove them;
Mean time, this tender office may divert
Thy sorrows; nay, if thou deniest me, Edwin,
I shall not think our union is sincere.
Edw. Then be it so
Mor. I'll send a trusty slave,
That shall conduct thee to her. Soon I mean
To follow thee—away—begone and prosper.
But, O, my brother! if thou hast a heart,
That is not steeled with stoic apathy
Against the magic of all-conquering love,
Beware of beauty's power; for she has charms
Would melt the frozen breast of hoary age,
Or draw the lonely hermit from his cell
To gaze upon her.
Edw. Know, thy fears are vain;
For long, long since, by honour's sacred ties,
United to the loveliest of her sex,
Edwin, like Morcar, is to one alone
Devoted, and my heart is fix'd as thine.
Mor. Then I am blest. Thy sympathetic soul,
With warmer feelings, shall express my passion,
Waked by the fond remembrance of thy own.
Go, then, thy kind returning friendship prove,
Go, plead with all the eloquence of love,
And, as thou dost thy brother's anguish tell,
Still on thy lips may soft persuasion dwell!
Urge my fond suit with energy divine,
Nor cease till thou hast made the lovely captive mine. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—MATILDA'S *Tent, with a distant View of the Camp.*

MATILDA *and* BERTHA.

Mat. O, Bertha! I have had such frightful dreams!
They harrowed up my soul.
Ber. It is the work
Of busy fancy in thy troubled mind;
Give it no heed.
Mat. O! it was more, much more
Than fancy ever formed; 'twas real all;
It haunts me still, and every circumstance
Is now before me; but I'll tell thee all.
Scarce had I closed my eyes, to seek that rest,
Which long had been a stranger, when, methought
Alone I wandered through a mazy wood,
Beset with thorns and briars on every side;
The mournful image of my wretched state:
When, from a winding walk, the beauteous form
Of my loved Edwin seemed to glide across,
And ran with haste to meet me: But, behold!
A tyger rushed between, and seized upon him:
I shrieked aloud.
Ber. 'Twas terrible.
Mat. But mark
What followed; for a gleam of light broke in,
And saved me from despair: When cross the glade
A generous lion, as with pity moved
At the unequal conflict, darted forth,
And sprung with vengeance on the spotted beast
Who turned with fury on his natural foe,
And loosed my Edwin; he escaped, and fled:
I waked in agonies.

Ber. Be comforted;
The dream presages good: Some generous friend
Shall save him from the perils of the war,
And give him to thy longing arms again.
Mat. O never, never!

Enter an Officer.

Offi. Noble lady, one
From William's camp, by Morcar's orders sent,
Would crave a minute's conference, and says
He bears some news that may be welcome.
Mat. Ha!
From William's camp! O, flattering hope! who knows
But he may bring some tidings of my love!
Tidings, perhaps, I may not wish to hear.
Perhaps he comes to speak of Edwin's death,
Or Edwin's falsehood—Be it as it may,
I cannot be more wretched than I am.
Conduct him hither. [*Exit Officer.*
O, my fluttering heart!
Look yonder! how imagination forms
What most we wish for; see! he comes! It is,
It is my Edwin—Save me, Bertha! O!——
[*As he enters, she faints.*

Enter EDWIN.

Edw. What do I see? Matilda here! she faints!
Am I deserted, then? abandoned, lost,
Betrayed by her I love! She breathes, she lives!
But not for me—for Morcar! for my brother!
Mat. [*To* BERTHA.] Where is he? O! it was delusion all;
The form deceived me. Had it been my love,
He would have flown with rapture to me—See,
He stands far off, and will not look upon me.
Edw. I dare not.
Mat. Is it thus we meet again?
Is this the kind, the tender, faithful Edwin?
Edw. Art thou Matilda? Speak—for I am lost
In wild astonishment. It cannot be.
In Morcar's camp! Is this the lovely captive,
That I should meet?
Mat. All-seeing Heaven,
Bear witness for me: If, from that sad hour
When last we parted, this devoted heart
Hath ever wandered, ever cast one thought,
Or formed a wish for any bliss but thee,
Despise me, Edwin; slight me, cast me off
To infamy and shame.
Edw. I must, I must
Believe thee; yet 'tis strange—when thou shalt know
From whom I came, and what my errand here.
Thou wilt not call me cruel or unkind,
When I shall tell thee I am come to claim
Another's right—O heaven! another's right
To my Matilda! to request thy hand
For Morcar.
Mat. For thy brother!
Edw. Yes, even now
We parted. Here, he told me, I should meet
A beauteous captive; little did I think
It was Matilda, whom he long had wooed;
Whose generous heart, he hoped, would now accept
A convert made to loyalty by love;
She only waited for that blest event,
With mutual ardour to return his passion.
Can it be thus? Alas! thy presence here
Confirms it but too well.
Mat. Appearance oft,
By strange events and causeless jealousy,
Confounds the guilty with the innocent.
But sure my Edwin's noble mind disdains
To cherish low suspicion; 'tis a vice
Abhorrent to thy nature, and Matilda
Will never practise it on thee. True love
Knows not distrust, or diffidence, but rests
On its own faith secure, and hopes to meet
The truth it merits.
Edw. Can this be the voice
Of falsehood? Can those lips——
Mat. Mistaken man!
Could'st thou e'er credit the delusive tale?
Could'st thou believe I had so soon forgot
My plighted faith? But, since I am suspected,
Return, and bear this answer back to Morcar.
First say, I thank him for the choice he made
Of thee to be the herald of his love:
For what is there Matilda can refuse,
That Edwin could request?
Edw. O! that recalls
A thousand tender thoughts——
Mat. Go tell him too,
Whate'er I rashly promised, but to gain
A few short moments, to preserve my king,
And save a father's life, I never meant
To feign a passion, which I could not feel;
For I was destined to another's arms;
To one, who now regardless of his vows
To poor Matilda, after three long years
Of cruel absence from her, comes, at last,
To doubt her honour, and suspect her love.
Edw. O! never, never!——Sooner will I doubt
The powers of nature, and believe these eyes
Can misinterpret every object here,
Than think thee false. O! take me to thy arms,
And bury all my doubts. Canst thou forgive
The jealous warmth of agonizing passion?
Mat. I can; I must. But say, to what blest chance
Am I indebted for this happy moment?
Edw. The chance of war. I am a prisoner here,
And but for thee——
Mat. When I shall tell thee all
That I have suffered, since we parted last,
Thou wilt not blame, but pity poor Matilda.
Meanwhile be calm; it is not now a time
For idle doubts, and visionary fears,
When real dangers threat. I see already,
By thy imperfect tale, what misery
Must soon await us, when the fiery earl
Shall know this strange event.
Edw. And wherefore know it?
Why not conceal our passion, till some means
Of freedom offer?
Mat. I abhor the thought.

No, Edwin, no. The crisis of our fate
Approaches. Never let us stain our loves
With crooked fraud and base dissimulation.
Hark! didst thou hear a voice in yonder grove?
Siward in conference with the haughty earl;
Behold them——see—they part—and Morcar hastes,
With quick impatient step, to know his fate.
Now, summon all thy powers.

Edw. I am prepared.
He comes: a few short minutes will determine
Whether Matilda plays the hypocrite,
Or is deserving of her Edwin's love.

Enter MORCAR.

Mor. At length, I hope, Matilda's satisfied.
Edwin has told thee what a sacrifice
My heart hath made. Ambition, glory, pride,
And fierce resentment bend beneath thy power,
And yield the palm to all-subduing love.
Yes, thou hast conquered. I am William's friend;
The struggle's past. I have performed the task
Assigned, and come to claim my just reward.

Mat. By virtuous acts the self-approving mind
Is amply paid, nor seeks a recompense
From aught beside. You have redeemed your honour,
Turned to the paths of duty, and discharged
The debt you owe your country, and your king:
England and William will be grateful for it.
What can you wish for more?

Mor. There is a prize,
More welcome far, beyond whate'er a king
Or kingdom can bestow——thy love——

Mat. My lord!

Mor. If, to have saved thee from the brutal rage
Of pitiless ruffians; if, to have renounced
A victor's claim, and be myself the slave
Of her I conquered; if to have released
My bitterest foe, because allied to thee;
If, after all my cruel wrongs, to accept
The proud oppressor's hand, can merit aught,
I am not quite unworthy of the boon.

Mat. The good and just, my lord, demand our praise,
And generous deeds will claim the tribute due,
The debt of humble gratitude; but love,
Love, that must mark the colour of our days
For good or ill, for happiness or woe,
'Tis not the gift of fortune, or of fame,
Nor earned by merit, nor acquired by virtue.
All the rich treasures, which or wealth or power
Have to bestow, can never purchase that,
Which the free heart alone itself must give.

Mor. Give it with freedom, then, to him, who most
Hath studied to deserve——

Mat. You talk, my lord,
As if the right of conquest could bestow
A right more precious, and a dearer claim;
But know, for now 'tis time to throw aside
The veil, that long hath hid from Morcar's eyes
The secret of my soul; and say, at last,
I never can be thine.

Mor. Ha! never! Oh,
Recall that word!

Mat. I must not: Edwin knows
There is a bar of adamant between,
That must for ever part us.

Mor. Ha! for ever!
Distraction! can it be? Take heed, Matilda,
I am not to be mocked thus. Oh, my brother!
Didst thou not hear her? But astonishment
Has closed thy lips in silence—Never mine!
And wherefore not be mine?
[*Turning to* MAT.
Mat. Because I am
Another's—Well I know our hapless sex
(So custom wills, and arbitrary man,)
Is taught, in fearful silence, to conceal
The honest feelings of a tender heart:
Else, wherefore should Matilda blush to own
A virtuous passion for the best of men?

Mor. A virtuous passion! grant me patience, Heaven!
I am betrayed, abandoned, lost. Another's!
Some fawning slave, some Norman plunderer,
Rich with the ravished spoils of English valour,
Hath snared her easy heart, and tortured mine.
But I will drag him from his dark abode;
Where'er he lurks, he shall not 'scape my vengeance.
Thou hear'st her, Edwin.

Edw. Aye: Who would not wish
To hear the voice of nature, and of love,
Thus nobly pleading by the lips of truth?

Mor. Amazement! Thou art linked with the vile slave,
That hath usurped my right. All, all conspire
To make me wretched.

Edw. Why should Morcar think,
That lovely maid would act beneath herself,
And make so mean a choice? Now, on my soul,
I doubt not but the object of her love
Hath earned the glorious prize, and will be found
Deserving of it.

Mor. Thou know'st him, then?

Edw. I do;
Know him as brave, as noble as thyself:
One who would scorn, howe'er the outward act
Might seem unworthy of him, to do aught
That should disgrace his family and name.
A man he is of yet untainted honour,
Of birth and valour equal to thy own,
Though fortune frowns upon him.

Mor. Now, by Heaven,
But that I know thy eyes were never blest
With my Matilda's charms, I should suspect
Thou hadst betrayed the sacred trust reposed
In thy false heart, by unsuspecting friendship,
And wert thyself the traitor.

Edw. Think so still.
Let fancy, ever busy to torment
The jealous mind, alarm thee with the thought
Of seeing him, whom thou hast thus reviled.
Stand forth and dare the proof; suppose him here
Before thee, ready to assert his claim,
His prior right, to all the joys that love
And fair Matilda can bestow: Then look

On me, and know thy rival in—thy brother.
Mor. Confusion! horror! misery! O, Heaven!
Canst thou behold such complicated guilt,
Such unexampled perfidy, and yet
Withhold thy vengeance? Let thy lightnings blast
The base betrayer! Oh, Matilda! false,
Deceitful, cruel woman!
Mat. 'Tis the lot
Of unprotected innocence to meet
The cruel censure, which to guilt alone
Is due. I've not deceived, I've not betrayed thee;
And, wouldst thou listen to the artless tale
I could unfold———
Mor. Away! I will not hear,
Nor see, nor think of thee. Deceitful villain!
Was this thy kind concern for Morcar's safety?
Was it for this, that subtle Edwin came
A willing captive? Boasted William's strength,
And lured me to a base, inglorious peace,
That, like a midnight ruffian, he might steal,
Unseen and unsuspected, on my love,
And rob me of Matilda?
Edw. I abhor
A thought so mean; the bare suspicion stains,
With such foul blot, my honour and my name,
I will not deign to answer thee. My birth
Alone might prove to any sense but thine,
That I disdain it: 'Tis enough to say,
I am earl Morcar's brother.
Mor. I disclaim
All ties of nature, or of friendship, with thee,
And henceforth hold thee as my deadliest foe:
As such, I will pursue thee, slave; for, know,
Thou art my prisoner still.——Who waits there? Seize
And guard this traitor———
[*Guards enter, and seize on* EDW.
Mat. [*Kneeling to* MOR.] Oh, my lord! if e'er
Soft pity touched thy breast, if e'er thy heart
Felt the warm glow of sympathetic grief
For the unhappy, do not let the rage
Of thoughtless passion urge thee to a deed
Of horror, which, too late, thou wilt repent.
Oh, spare a guiltless brother! spare thyself
The bitter pangs of sad remorse, that soon
Shall harrow up thy soul, when radiant truth
Shall flash conviction on thee. Oh! forgive
And pity——
Edw. Rise, Matilda: 'Tis beneath
The dignity of innocence to kneel
Before proud guilt, and supplicate a tyrant.
Mat. [*Rising.*] I feel the just reproach—Forgive me, Edwin;
Henceforth, I never will disgrace thy love,
By mean submission. Morcar, if thou hop'st
For future peace, or pardon, set us free.
Mor. I'll hear no more; convey her to her tent.
Mat. Edwin, adieu! If honour, virtue, truth,
And mutual love, protect the innocent,
We yet shall meet in happiness—Farewell!
[*Exit* MAT. *guarded.*
Mor. Let none have entrance there, but faithful Siward.
Would he were here, that I might pour my sorrows
Into his friendly bosom! Oh, Siward!
Where art thou?—Ha, he comes!

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. My lord, the troops,
Flushed with their late success, refuse all terms
Of peace with William, and cry out for war
And vengeance——
Mor. They shall have it. Now, by Heaven!
Thou bring'st me glorious tidings—Well, what more?
Siw. They have discovered that the noble prisoner,
Who had surrendered, is thy brother Edwin:
This hath alarmed them; they suspect you both
Of vile collusion, to betray their cause,
And yield them to the tyrant. If, they say,
You mean them fair, let Edwin be confined,
And answer for the treason with his life.
Mor. And so he shall: They could not ask a boon,
Which Morcar would more readily bestow;
Already their request is granted.—See,
The traitor is secured. All-seeing Heaven!
Thou seest how justice will o'ertake the wicked!
Siw. What can this mean? Since last I saw my friend,
How the fair day, that shone so bright upon us,
Is suddenly o'ercast!
Mor. Alas, my Siward!
When thou shalt know—but 'tis enough to say
Matilda's false, and Edwin is—a villain!
Siw. Amazement! can it be?
Mor. It is too true;
And I am lost for ever. Oh, Matilda!
Deceitful woman!
Siw. 'Tis not now a time
For idle plaints: consult your safety: fly
This moment to the camp—your presence there,
And that alone, may quell the rising storm:
Leave Edwin to my care.
Mor. I go, my Siward,
Safe in thy friendship; I entrust to thee
My just revenge. Yon moss-grown tower, that hangs
O'er the deep flood—'tis under thy command—
Place double guard—he must not 'scape—his fate
Shall be determined soon. What'e'er it prove,
It cannot be more wretched than my own.
[*Exit* MOR.
Edw. [*Pointing to the guards.*] Where is my dungeon? my conductors here
Wait but your orders; give them their commission;
For you, it seems, sir, are to execute
The friendly office: do it, and be happy.
Siw. Guards, set your prisoner free—thou little know'st
Of Siward's soul, to think it joys in aught,
That gives another pain. I have learnt too well,
In sad affliction's hard, but wholesome school,

The lesson of humanity.
Edw. O generous Siward, if thou hast a heart
To feel for others' miseries, pity mine,
And poor Matilda's: she has not deserved
A fate like this.
Siw. Alas! it rives my soul
To see the tender bonds of amity
Thus torn asunder, by the very means,
I fondly thought for ever would unite them;
And the fair structure, which my hopes had raised,
Of love and friendship, in a moment shrunk
From its weak base, and buried all in ruin.
If thou can'st prove thy innocence, as yet
I hope thou wilt, for in that noble mien
I read a conscious pride, that would not stoop
To aught that's base—still may I hope to heal
These bleeding wounds, and sooth him to forgiveness.
Mean time be free. Give me thy sacred word,
The soldier's oath, thou wilt be found whene'er
I call upon thee; and yon tent alone
Shall be thy prison; free to range around,
Far as my guard extends.
Edw. Accept my thanks,
The humble tribute of a grateful heart;
'Tis all I have to give. The time may come,
When Edwin shall repay thee as he ought.
Siw. Is there aught more, which honour, and the duty
I owe my friend, permits me to bestow,
That thou would'st ask?
Edw. Oh! grant me to behold
That injured maid, to take my last farewell!
Then act as fate and Morcar shall determine.
I give the pledge of safety thou requir'st,
And will be found—speak, wilt thou listen to me?
Siw. Of that we will talk hereafter—come—within
I'll hear thy story—thou but know'st me yet
As Morcar's friend; hereafter thou may'st find
I am still more the friend—of truth and virtue.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment belonging to* SIWARD, *opening to a Wood.*

Enter EDWIN *and* MATILDA.

Edw. Thanks to the noble Siward's generous pity
For the distressed, once more we meet, Matilda,
But only meet, alas! to mourn our fate,
To feel each other's woes, and to be wretched.
Mat. Eternal blessings wait on him, who thus
Could sweeten sorrow's bitter draught, and make
Captivity a blessing! Oh, my Edwin!
A few short moments, spent with those we love,
Is worth an age of common life.
Edw. With thee,
Indeed, it is; but we are on the verge
Of a dark precipice, and every step
Is dangerous. If Morcar should return,
And find us here together, we are lost
For ever; thou hast seen, and seen with horror,
The desperate rage of his tumultuous soul;
Let us avoid it, let us——
Mat. What, my love?
Thou art my guide, protector, guardian, all
I have to boast on earth. Oh! teach me where
To find some blest asylum for my woes,
And guide my footsteps to the paths of peace—
Edw. Let me entreat thee, then——
Mat. Oh, speak! thou know'st
I have no will but thine.
Edw. Then leave me, leave
This hated roof: I have a friend within,
Who shall conduct thee to the royal camp
In safety; bear this signet to the king;
He will protect thee, and whatever fate
Decrees for me, Matilda may be happy.
Mat. Oh! never, never! safety dwells with thee,
And thee alone. Without my faithful Edwin,
The peopled city, and the crowded court,
Would be a desert to me. No, my love,
We will not part: the same benignant power,
That led thee hither, that, beyond my hopes,
Brought my lost Edwin to these arms again,
Will still protect that virtue, which it loves.
Edw. Did'st thou not tell me, that this very morn
Thou had'st determined, as the only means
To shun my brother's love, on sudden flight?
Mat. But then I should have fled in search of thee.
Edw. Thou winning softness! how shall I reward
Such unexampled tenderness and truth!
Mat. By flying with me. Come, my love, lead on!
I'll follow thee to dangers and to death;
Nor perils shall affright, nor labours tire,
When thou art with me.
Edw. No: It must not be.
Mat. Why? What should keep thee here?
Edw. The ties of honour.
Mat. And are they stronger than the bonds of love?
Edw. To Siward's kind indulgence, well thou know'st,
I owe this little interval of peace,
This transient gleam of happiness with thee;
And should I break my sacred word, his life
Might answer for it; would'st thou have me thus
Repay his kindness? No, my love; I may
Be wretched, but I cannot be ungrateful.
Mat. Must thou return, then, to that hateful prison,

When Morcar comes?
Edw. I must. Oh! think, when I
Am pent within a loathsome dungeon, who
Shall shelter, then, thy unprotected virtue?
No Edwin there to succour thee: who knows
What brutal lust and power may dare to act,
On a deserted, beauteous, friendless woman?
Distracting thought! A monarch's vengeance then
Would come too late; would make me poor amends
For my Matilda's violated charms.
Mat. He cannot be so mean, so base of soul;
Or, if he should, I have a dagger here
To save me from dishonour.
Edw. What! by death?
Dreadful alternative! Oh! hazard not
Thy precious life, but seize the lucky moment,
Which fortune gives us, ere it be too late.
Mat. Urge me no more; already I have felt,
Too deeply felt, the pangs of absence from thee;
Another separation would be worse
Than death, and all its terrors. No, my love;
We are embarked on a tumultuous sea,
And must abide the fury of the storm.
The waves of angry fortune may o'erwhelm,
But shall not part us: we will stem the torrent,
Brave the proud ocean's rage, and gain the harbour
Of peace and happiness, or sink together.
Edw. Thou hast foretold the tempest, and behold
It rushes on us.

Enter MORCAR *and* HAROLD.

Mat. Ha! earl Morcar here!
Mor. Harold, I thank thee; thy intelligence
Was but too true.
Traitor! who set thee free? [*Turning to* EDWIN.
They would have 'scaped my vengeance—false Matilda!
'Tis thus I am rewarded for my love,
My ill-timed mercy to a thankless brother.
Back to thy dungeon, slave! guards, drag him hence,
To prison, and to death! [*To the soldiers.*
Edw. Or death, or life,
Are equal to me, if I must be torn
From my Matilda. But, whate'er thy purpose,
Be speedy in thy vengeance, nor delay
The cruel work; for know, thy master comes,
William approaches—to revenge my cause.
Mor. But not to save thee.
Edw. Then, farewell, Matilda,
Perhaps for ever—if we meet no more,
Thou wilt remember—but I will not doubt
Thy honour, or thy love. I know thy truth;
Know thou wilt act as best becomes thy fate
Whate'er it be, and worthy of thyself.
Mat. Of thee, my Edwin, rather say, of thee.
Yes; I will copy well thy bright example;
I'll not disgrace thy love with woman's weakness,
But part without a tear. I will but stay
To tell thy tyrant brother how I hate,
How I despise him, and then follow thee.
Mor. I'll hear no more—begone! away with him. [*Exeunt guards with* EDWIN.
Mat. What for me remains
I know too well; thy odious love, reproach
Unmeritcd, and threats, which I despise.
Thou think'st I have deceived thee—think so still.
Enjoy thy error. Thou believ'st us guilty;
'Twill make thee happy now. Perchance, to find
Us innocent, may be thy punishment hereafter.
Mor. Aye, 'twas a proof of innocence to fly,
Thou and thy paramour together.
Mat. No;
I scorn a thought so mean. Could I have left
My Edwin, long ere this I might have been
Beyond the reach of tyranny; beyond
Thy hated power; and safe beneath the wing
Of sacred majesty, in William's care.
Mor. In William's care!
Mat. Thy conqueror's—for know
The hero comes—to scatter blessings round him,
To heal his country's wounds, chastise rebellion,
And punish false perfidious slaves like thee.
Mor. By Heavens! she braves my wrath, insults my weakness,
And triumphs o'er her slave.
Mat. There was a time,
When, with an eye of pity, I beheld
Thy hopeless love; when I concealed my passion
For the dear idol of my heart, because
I feared 'twould make thee wretched; but thy rage,
Thy cruel treatment of a guiltless brother,
Has cancelled all.
Mor. Then, mark me: If thou hop'st
For Edwin's freedom, shake off this vile passion;
Yield thy proud heart to him, who best deserves it,
And meet me at the altar—Two hours hence,
I shall expect thee there—Beyond that time,
He may not live to thank thee for thy bounty.
Mat. Then let him perish——glut thy tyrant soul
With vengeance: bathe it in a brother's blood.
All ruffian, all barbarian, as thou art,
Thou canst not murder his immortal fame:
Thou canst not rob him of Matilda's love.
But know—when he, for whom alone this pulse
Would wish to beat, this lazy blood to flow
Within my veins—when he shall be no more,
Another life shall satiate thy revenge;
Another victim shall attend thy triumph.
Mor. Thou talk'st it nobly—'tis the common trick,
The affectation of thy sex, to boast
A fancied firmness, which ye never knew;
But with affrighted nature thou wouldst shrink,
When death approaches.
Mat. Put me to the proof.
If thou wouldst punish Edwin, know he lives
Within this breast—strike home, and pierce him there.
Mor. Imperious woman! thou defy'st my power,
And let it crush thee. If thy country bleeds
In every vein; if perjured Edwin falls,
As soon he shall, a victim to my rage;

Thou art the murderer; thou the parricide.
I stand absolved; the guilt is all thy own.
Mat. If it be guilt to suffer keen reproach,
Pain, persecution, terror, chains and death,
For him I love, rather than stain my soul
With foul disloyalty, I am indeed
The guiltiest of my sex, and well deserve
The pangs I feel.
Mor. Thou'st driven me to the pit
Of black despair, and I will drag thee down,
To share the dreadful ruin thou hast made.
Mat. I know thy savage purpose; but, remember,
The hour approaches, when thou shalt repent
This base, unmanly triumph. William comes;
Hear that and tremble, thou unnatural brother!
Nor rocks, nor caves, shall hide thee from his vengeance;
Inglorious, and unpitied, shalt thou fall,
And after ages shall consign thy name
To endless scorn, and infamy immortal.
[*Exit* MATILDA.
Mor. Inexorable judge! I stand condemned,
And shall await my doom; but not alone,
Or unrevenged, shall Morcar fall—henceforth
I bid adieu to love, and all his train
Of fond delusions. Vengeance! I am thine,
And thine alone: Thou daughter of despair!
Destructive goddess! come, possess my soul
With all thy terrors—Yes; it shall be so.
A few short hours are all that niggard fate
Will deign to spare me; I'll employ them well,
For I will crowd into the narrow circle
A little age of misery and horror.
Ha! Siward here! what brought thee hither?

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Pity
For the distressed. I knew thou wert unhappy,
And came where duty called, to pour the balm
Of friendship in, and heal thy wounded heart.
Mor. O, they have pierced too deep; even thou, my friend,
Thou hast betrayed me: was it not unkind
To set my prisoner free; to let him meet
Matilda, and conspire against my life?
Siw. Impossible! by Heaven, the artful story
He told so wrought upon my easy soul,
I thought him innocent.
Mor. Hast thou not heard—
Siw. From Harold only an imperfect tale;
So strange I could not credit it.
Mor. Alas!
'Tis all too true: I am the veriest slave,
The meanest wretch, that e'er was trampled on
By an imperious woman: O, my friend!
My Siward! I have nought on earth but thee:
Shouldst thou forsake me in this hour of terror!
But sure thou wilt not!
Siw. No: whate'er the will
Of wayward fortune may determine for us,
Behold me ready to partake thy fate.
If we must sue for peace, let Siward bear
The olive for thee: if once more we cast
The desperate dye of battle, let me perish
By Morcar's side. Come, let us on together;
Shake off this load of unavailing sorrow,
And seek the field; there, if we fall, we fall
With honour: if we rise, we rise to—glory.
Mor. Talk not of glory to a wretch like me,
Bereft of every hope. There was a time,
When that enlivening call would have awaked
My active spirit, and this drooping heart
Bounded with joy; but, my Matilda lost,
Revenge alone——

Enter a Messenger to SIWARD *with letters.*

Siw. From Walstcoff these?
'Tis well—retire. [*Exit Mesenger.*
[*Reads.*]——How's this? then all is lost.
He writes me here, that William's fame in arms,
Spite of his cruel and oppressive laws,
Hath raised him friends in every part: already
The northern rebels are dispersed, and thousands
Flock to the royal standard. To resist
Were madness.
Mor. And to yield were cowardice
More shameful.
Siw. What must we resolve on?
Mor. Death:
The wretch's only hope, the wished-for end
Of every care; but I would meet him cloathed
In all his terrors, with his reeking spear,
Dipt in the blood of an ungrateful mistress,
And a false happy rival: Then, my Siward,
Shalt thou behold me welcome the kind stroke,
And smile in agony.
Siw. Unhappy youth!
The storm beats hard upon thee; but our fate
Will soon be fixt, for William comes to-morrow.
Mor. To-morrow! ha! then something must be done,
And quickly too. If William comes, he comes
To triumph o'er us: then, my Siward, who
Shall punish Edwin? who—shall wed Matilda?
I cannot bear it—If thou lov'st me, Siward—
For now I mean to try thy virtue—swear
By all the powers, that wait on injured honour,
Whate'er my anxious soul requests of thee,
Thou'lt not refuse it.
Siw. By the hallowed flame
Of sacred friendship, that within this breast,
Since the first hour I sealed thee for my own,
With unremitted ardour still hath glowed,
I will not—Speak, my Morcar, here I swear
To aid thy purpose.
Mor. 'Tis enough; and now
Come near, and mark me: Thou command'st the tower
Where Edwin is confined.
Siw. I do.
Mor. Methinks
It were an easy task—you understand me—
Justice is slow, and William comes to-morrow.
Thy friendly hand———
Siw. My lord!———
Mor. Thou trembl'st——Well, another time, my Siward,
We'll talk on't—shall we not? Thou mean'st to do
As thou hast promised?

Siw. Certainly.
Mor. Then speak,
And do not trifle with me.
Siw. Sure, my lord,
You cannot mean to———
Mor. Is he not a villain?
Siw. I fear he may be so.
Mor. A hypocrite?
Siw. He hath, perhaps, deceived you, and deserves———
Mor. To perish.
Siw. No; to suffer, not to die;
Or, if to perish, not by Morcar's hand,
Or Siward's—Oh! 'tis horrible to shed
A brother's blood———
Mor. A rival's.
Siw. Nature——
Mor. Love——
Siw. Humanity——
Mor. Matilda——
Siw. [*Aside.*] Gracious Heaven!
That passion thus should root up every sense
Of good and evil in the heart of man,
And change him to—a monster!
Mor. Hence! away!
And leave me—From this moment I will herd
With the wild savage in yon leafless desert,
Nor trust to friendship—but another hand——
Siw. [*Musing.*] Ha! that alarms me—then it must be so;
And yet how far——
Mor. You pause.
Siw. I am resolved——
Mor. On what?
Siw. To serve, to honour, to—obey you.
Edwin shall ne'er disturb thy peace again.
Mor. O glorious instance of exalted friendship!
My other self, my best, my dear-loved Siward—
Conscience! thou busy monitor, away
And leave me—Siward, when shall it be done?
To-night, my Siward, shall it not?
Siw. Or never.
Mor. Let me but see the proud Matilda weep;
Let me but hear the music of her groans,
And sate my soul with vengeance—For the rest
'Tis equal all. But tell me, Siward, say,
How shall I know the bloody moment? What
Shall be the welcome signal!
Siw. When thou hear'st
The solemn curfew sound, conclude
The business done—Farewell. When I return,
With tears of joy thou shalt my zeal commend,
And own, that Siward was indeed thy friend.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Gothic Hall.*

Enter MORCAR *and* HAROLD.

Mor. Treason and foul rebellion in my camp!
But I was born to be for ever wretched,
The sport of fortune. These base mutineers—
Har. Your presence on the battlements, my lord,
Dispersed them soon; they hung their heads in silence,
And all is peace.
Mor. [*Aside.*] It is not so within.
Would it were done, or——
Har. What, my lord?
Mor. No matter.
What urged my soldiers to rebel?
Har. 'Tis thought
The gallant captive did, by secret means,
Excite them to revolt.
Mor. It must be so.
By Heaven! thou mak'st me happy with the tidings:
His head shall pay the forfeit.
Har. Whilst he lives
We are not safe.
Mor. No more we are, good Harold;
'Tis fit he perish, is it not? What say'st thou?
Har. Prudence demands his life to save your own.
Mor. Oh! thou hast given such comfort to my soul——
Har. My lord——
Mor. Be watchful: Bring me early notice
Of every motion. Go. [*Exit* HAROLD.
Or I must fall,
Or Edwin.—Hence! ye visionary fears;
Ye vain chimeras, hence!—It is no matter:
Conscience, I heed thee not; 'tis self-defence,
Nature's first law, and I must stand acquitted.
The prudent Siward seemed to hesitate,
As if he wished, but knew not how to shun
The office. He, who could behold my tortures
With all that cold tranquillity, would ne'er
Have ventured to remove them. But I've trusted
The sword of vengeance to a safer hand.
What ho! Who waits?

Enter an Officer.

That soldier, whom thou saw'st
In private conference with me, is he gone
As I directed him?
Offi. My lord, even now
I saw him hastening toward the tower.
Mor. 'Tis well.
When he returns, conduct him to me—Stay:
If Siward comes this way, I'm not at leisure:
I will not see him [*Starts.*] Hark! didst thou not hear
The solemn curfew?
Offi. No, my lord.
Mor. Not hear it!
It shocks my soul with horror—Hark! again!
Hollow and dreadful! Sure thy faculties

Are all benumbed.
Offi. Indeed, I heard it not.
Mor. Away! and leave me to myself.
[*Exit Officer.*
Methought
I heard a voice cry—Stop—it is thy brother!
We loved each other well; our early years
Were spent in mutual happiness together:
Matilda was not there—I do remember
One day, in sportive mood, I rashly plunged
Into the rapid flood, which had well nigh
O'erwhelmed me; when the brave, the gallant Edwin
Rushed in, and saved me.—Shall I, in return,
Destroy my kind preserver? Horrid thought!
Forbid it, Heaven! [*Pauses.*] I am myself again.
All powerful nature! once more I am thine.
He shall not die—Who's there?

Enter an Officer.

My Oswald! fly,
Fly to the tower this moment, haste and save
My brother—Some base ruffian——
Offi. If, my lord,
You mean the noble prisoner there, I fear
It is too late: This moment, as I passed
The citadel, I saw a mangled corse
Drawn forth by Siward's order——
Mor. Slave, thou liest!
Away this moment, bring me better news
On peril of thy life! [*Exit Officer.*
Who knows, but Heaven,
In gracious pity, still may interpose,
And save me from the guilt? It is not done;
It shall not—must not be—All's quiet yet;
I have not heard the signal. [*The bell tolls.*
Hark! he's dead:
My brother's dead!—Oh! cover me, ye shades
Of everlasting night! Hide, if ye can,
A murderer from himself. Ha! see, he comes:
His wounds are bleeding still! his angry eyes
Glare full upon me! Speak—what wouldst thou have?
Matilda shall be thine—He smiles, and leaves me——
[*He pauses, and recovers himself.*
'Twas but the error of my troubled soul.
Oh! guilt, guilt, guilt! [*Throws himself down.*
Here will I lay me down,
And end my days in bitterness and anguish.

Enter SIWARD.

Who's there? Ha! Siward here! [*Rises.*
Speak, murderer, speak!
Where is my brother? Villain, thou hast snared
My soul; my honour's stained, my fame destroyed,
And my sweet peace of mind is lost for ever!
Siw. Matilda will restore it.
Mor. Never, never!
The price of blood! No: Could Matilda bring
The vanquished world, in dowry with her charms,
I would not wed her. O! could I recall
One hasty moment, one rash, cruel act—
But 'twas thy savage hand that——
Siw. I received
Your orders: 'Twas my duty to obey them.
Mor. Where slept thy friendship then? Thou know'st despair
And madness urged me to it—but for thee—
Thy callous heart had never felt the pangs,
The agonies of disappointed love;
Thou did'st not know Matilda—Cursed obedience!
How often has thy insolence opposed
Thy master and thy prince! how often dared
To thwart my will, and execute thy own:
But, when I bade thee do a deed of horror,
And shed a brother's blood—thou could'st obey me.
Siw. Away! this is the trick of self-delusion,
The common cant of hypocrites, who rail
At others' guilt, to mitigate their own.
I've been the mean, the servile instrument
Of thy base vengeance; but thou had'st prepared
Another, a low ruffian, to perform
The bloody office; I detest thee for it,
Despise, abhor thee.
Mor. Thou wert once my friend.
Siw. Henceforth I am thy foe—Thou hast destroyed
The best of brothers, and the best of men.
Mor. Despised by Siward—then my cup of sorrow
Is full, indeed—But this shall—
[*Attempts to kill himself,* SIWARD *wrests the sword from him.*]
Ha! disarmed!
But coward guilt is weak as infancy;
It was not so before I murdered Edwin.
Siw. The murderer's punishment should be to live,
And shall be thine; thou know'st not half thy guilt,
Nor half thy sorrows: I shall rend thy soul.
Prepare thee for another deeper wound,
And know that Edwin loved thee! In his hand,
Whilst mine was lifted up for his destruction,
I found this paper; 'tis the counterpart
Of one he had dispatched to William; read it,
And tremble at thy complicated guilt.
Mor. [*Taking the paper.*] What's here? He pleads my pardon with the king,
Ascribes my frantic zeal, in Edgar's cause,
To ill-advised warmth, and recommends
His—murderer to mercy! Horrid thought!
I am the vilest, most abandoned slave,
That e'er disgraced humanity—O Siward!
If thou hast yet, among the dying embers
Of our long friendship, one remaining spark
Of kind compassion for the wretched Morcar,
Lend me thy aid, to shake off the sad load
Of hated life, that presses sore upon me.
Siw. Though thou'rt no longer worthy of my friendship,
Deaf to the cries of nature, and the voice
Of holy truth, that would have counselled thee
To better deeds, yet hath my foolish heart
Some pity for thee—After crimes, like these,
There is but one way left. Say, wilt thou patient wait

Till I return?
Mor. I will.
Siw. Remember, Morcar,
You promised me—I have a draught within,
Of wondrous power, that in a moment lulls
The tortured soul to sweet forgetfulness
Of all its woes: I'll haste and bring it thee;
'Twill give thee rest and peace. [*Exit* SIWARD.
Mor. I hope for ever.
But where's the lost Matilda? who shall comfort
That dear unhappy maid, whom I have robbed
Of every bliss. O, save me from the sight,
Ye pitying powers!

Enter MATILDA.

She comes—distraction!
Mat. Oh!
My lord, permit—
Mor. Away—I know thee not.
Mat. Not know me! 'tis the poor distressed Matilda,
Who comes to ask forgiveness for the rage
Of frantic love, the madness of despair,
That urged me to such wrath and bitterness
Of keen reproach; but pardon— [*Kneels.*
Generous Morcar,
A woman's weakness: Speak, and make me blest.
Alas! he hears me not.
Mor. Matilda, rise;
I pray thee leave me— [*Weeps.*
Mat. Gracious Heaven! he weeps;
Propitious omen! O, my lord! those tears
Are the soft marks of sympathizing woe,
And seem to say, I shall not plead in vain.
Mor. Ask what thou wilt, for know, so dear I hold
Matilda's happiness, that, here I swear,
If all the kingdoms of the peopled earth
Were mine to give, I'd lay them at her feet;
But, much I fear, they would not make her happy.
Mat. Alas! my lord, Matilda's happiness
Is centered all in one dear precious jewel;
'Tis in thy keeping—Edwin—
Mor. What of him?
Mat. Is innocent.
Mor. I know it.
Mat. Just and good;
He never meant to injure thee; indeed,
He did not.
Mor. I believe it, for his nature
Was ever mild and gentle.
Mat. Good my lord,
You mock me.
Mor. No, Matilda; speak, go on,
And praise him: I could talk to thee for ever
Of Edwin's virtues—
Mat. Then thou would'st not hurt
His precious life, thou would'st not—
Mor. I would give
A thousand worlds to save him.
Mat. Would'st thou? then
My prayers are heard, thou hast forgiven all,
And I am happy. Speak, is Edwin free!
Mor. From every care—would I were half so blest!
Mat. What mean you? Ha! th eyes are fixt with horror,
Thy looks are wild. What hast thou done? O! speak.
Mor. Matilda, if thou com'st for Edwin's life,
It is too late—for Edwin is no more.
Mat. And is my Edwin slain?
Mor. Ay: basely murdered.
O! 'twas the vilest, most unnatural deed
That ever—
Mat. Blasted be the cruel hand,
That dealt the blow! O, may his guilty heart
Ne'er taste of balmy peace, or sweet repose!
Mor. But ever, by the vulture conscience torn,
Bleed inward, still unpitied, till he seek
For refuge in the grave.
Mat. Nor find it there.
Mor. 'Tis well: thy curses are accomplished all;
I feel them here within—for know—'twas I.
I gave the fatal order, and my friend,
My Siward, has too faithfully performed it.
Mat. Siward! impossible! There dwells not then
In human breast, or truth, or virtue—O!
Unnatural brother! but I will be calm.
Mor. Alas! thy fate is happiness to mine;
For thou art innocent.
Mat. And soon, I hope
To be rewarded for it. O! my Edwin,
Matilda soon shall follow thee—thou think'st
I am unarmed, deserted, doomed, like thee,
To hated life; but know, I have a friend,
A bosom-friend, and prompt, as thine, to enter
On any bloody service I command.
[*Draws a dagger.*
Mor. Command it then for justice, for revenge!
Behold! my bosom rises to the blow;
Strike here, and end a wretched murderer—
Mat. No;
That were a mercy thou hast not deserved;
I shall not seek revenge in Morcar's death,
In mine thou shalt be wretched—
[*Attempts to stab herself;* MORCAR *lays hold of the dagger.*
Mor. Stop, Matilda—
Stop thy rash hand! the weight of Edwin's blood
Sits heavy on my heart. O! do not pierce it
With added guilt.
Mat. No more! I must be gone
To meet my Edwin, who already chides
My lingering steps, and beckons me away.
Mor. Yet hear me! O! if penitence and prayer,
If deep contrition, sorrow, and remorse,
Could bring him back to thy desiring eyes,
O! with what rapture would I yield him now
To thee, Matilda—bear me witness—Ha!
[*Starts.*
'Tis he—Look up, dear injured maid—he comes
To claim my promise.

Mat. It is, it is my Edwin!

Enter SIWARD *and* EDWIN.—EDWIN *runs and embraces* MATILDA.

Mor. O unexpected bliss! what gracious hand—
Siw. Behold the cordial draught I promised you!
I knew thy noble nature, when the storm
Of passion had subsided, would abhor
A deed so impious—'Tis the only time,
That Siward ever did deceive his friend.
Canst thou forgive?
Mor. Forgive thee! O thou art
My guardian angel, sent by gracious Heaven
To save me from perdition. O, my brother!
I blush to stand before thee—wilt thou take
From these polluted hands, one precious gift?
'Twill make thee full amends for all thy wrongs.
Accept her, and be happy.
[*He joins the hands of* EDWIN *and* MATILDA, *then turning to* SIWARD,
That vile slave
Whom I employed—
Siw. I guessed his horrid purpose,
Watched every step, and as the villain aimed
His poniard at the guiltless Edwin's breast,
Turned sudden round, and plunged it in his own.
The bloody corse was dragged—
Mor. I know the rest.
O, Siward! from what weight of endless woe
Hath thy blest hand preserved me!
Edw. O, my Matilda! how shall we repay
Our noble benefactor? Much I owe
To gallant Siward, but to Morcar more:
Thou gav'st me life, but my kind, generous brother
Enhanced the gift, and blessed me with Matilda.
Mat. [*To* MORCAR.] Words are too poor to thank thee as I ought;
Accept this tribute of a grateful heart,
These tears of joy; and, O! may every curse
My frantic grief for Edwin poured upon thee,
Be changed to dearest blessings on thy head!
Mor. Alas! thy blessings cannot reach me. Guilt
May plead for pardon, but can never boast
A claim to happiness: I only ask
A late forgiveness. If a life of sorrow,
And deep remorse, can wash my crimes away,
Let them be buried, with me, in oblivion,
And do not curse the memory of Morcar.
[*Turning to* EDWIN.
O, Edwin! say, canst thou forgive the crime
Of frantic love, of madness and despair?
Edw. As in my latest hour from Heaven I hope
Its kind indulgence for my errors past,
Even so, my brother, from my soul, I pardon
And pity thee.
Mor. Then I shall die in peace.
Edw. Talk not of death, my brother; thou must live
To see our happiness complete, to hear
My sweet Matilda pour forth all her heart
In rapturous thanks to thee, and to thy friend:
And grateful Edwin bless thee for thy bounties.
Mor. It must not be: I know too much already,
Of Morcar's weakness, and Matilda's power;
They are not to be trusted. No, my Edwin,
Morcar shall never interrupt thy joys.
Far from the sight, and from the haunts of men,
In some deep distant solitude retired,
To pious sorrow will I dedicate
My short remains of wretched life, and strive
To make my peace with Heaven and wronged Matilda.
And if, perchance, in after times, some bard,
Struck with the native horrors of my tale,
Should bid the historic muse record it—let him,
By my example, teach a future age
The dire effects of loose, unbridled rage;
Teach thoughtless men their passions to controul,
And curb the sallies of the impetuous soul,
Lest they experience worse than Morcar's woe,
Nor find a Siward—to prevent the blow.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE

COUNTESS OF SALISBURY.

BY

HARTSON.

PROLOGUE.

SPOKEN IN THE CHARACTER OF A TEAGUE.

My jewels, I'm come to speak in the behalf—
Hoot, devil burn you all, you makes me laugh;
Upon my soul now, I don't take it well in you;—
Arra, be easy till I'm after telling you.
Smit with the love of glory and of pelf,
To-night a bard, from Dublin its own self,
Has brought a play here for your approbation;
A very pretty thing, by my salvation,—
If you'll trust Irish evidence, I mean.—
I can't the story very well explain:
But it's about a countess and an earl;
The countess is a mighty honest girl.
But there's a villain, with a damn'd cramp'd name,
Makes such proposals—'tis a burning shame—
Another too—a knight—bekeys as why—
But hould you now,—you'll see it by and bye;
And then 'tis time enough to tell the plot.—
Oh, but that's true,—I'd like to have forgot
The dresses:—'pon my conscience, in my days
I never saw their peer,—they're all a blaze.
Then there's a child, the sweetest little rogue!—
Only excuse a trifling spice of brogue;—
He'll make you cry your eyes out, I'll be bound—
'Tis Ireland is the true poetic ground.
The muses—Phœbus—heathenish cant I loath!
What's mount Parnassus to the Hill of Howth?
Or all the scenes each foolish poet paints—
Oh, bub-bub boo! give me the isle of Saints.—
Turn up your noses—cavil now and carp,
Musha, I'm sure our emblem is the harp.
But stop!—the bell rings.—Fait they'll soon begin;
'Tis time for me to be agoing in;
I take my leave, then—but, dear craters, mind—
Pray, to our Irish poetry be kind:
'Tis a new manufacture in effect;
And yours, my souls, t'encourage and protect.
No critic custom then enacted be,
Pass it, like Irish linen, duty free.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Lord SALISBURY, *disguised as Alwin.*
RAYMOND, *Lover of Lady Salisbury.*
GREY, *his Creature.*
MORTON, *Sir* ARDOLF, LEROCHES, } *Friends to Salisbury.*
Lord WILLIAM, *infant Son of Salisbury.*

WOMEN.

Lady SALISBURY.
ELEANOR, *her Attendant.*

Knights, Peasants, &c.

SCENE,—*Salisbury Castle, and the Country about it.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Avenue leading to a Gothic Castle.*

Enter GREY *and first Knight.*

Grey. A MESSENGER dispatched by lady Salisbury!
Knt. And, in the specious guise he wore, had passed
Unquestioned, had not I, in happy season,
Approached, even as the unwary centinels
Half op'd the gate. By threats o'erawed in part,
In part through hope of favour won, he owned,
At length, by whom employed, whither bent,
And for what purpose.
Grey. Say——
Knt. Straight to repair
To Marlborough; where now, as fame reports,
Our king resides, with all his peers; and there
To seek the lord de Warren; to what end
This paper will, as I suppose, inform you.
I was about to bear it to lord Raymond.
Grey. That care be mine. Henceforward it concerns
Us near. Our vigilance be doubly firm. [*Exit Knt.*
[*Reads.*] 'The countess of Salisbury, to her illustrious friend, the lord de Warren.
'I have lost my husband—Me and my lands lord Raymond claims, as by royal grant assigned to him. He has banished my train, encompassed me with his creatures, and holds me a prisoner in my own castle. If the memory of thy noble friend be dear to thee, haste and rescue the afflicted ELA.'
How near was Raymond's hope, the beauteous hope
He tended with unceasing care; how near
My rising fortunes marred—I like not this:
Her, and her rich domains, he would possess;
Yet in his breast there lives that kind of heart
Withholds him from the path that's nearest. He,
That would be great, must first be bold.
I hate those motleyed characters;
Something, I know not what, 'twixt good and ill,
Yet neither absolute; all good, all ill,
For me—That day, saith he, that happy day,
Which sees the countess mine, shall amply pay
Thy services—a doubtful balance this
Whereon my fortunes hang.—This way he moves;
And, by his gait and gesture, ill at ease——
We must be firm;
My hopes demand it, and the time admits
No weak, no scrupulous delay——

Enter RAYMOND.

Ray. To sue,
But ever without grace to sue—Oh Grey!
I am even weary of the vain pursuit.
Grey. It is, in truth, my lord, an irksome labour.
Ray. But now I cast me at the fair one's feet;
Pleaded my passion with whatever arts
Might best the gentle purpose aid; but she,
Instead of such return as I might hope,
Repaid me with an eye of cold contempt.
Of her late gallant lord she spoke; his merits
In opposition hateful placed to mine.
Urged then with recollection of her wrongs,
Like the loud torrent, with steep winter rains
O'ercharged, in all the loose, ungoverned sway
Of wrath and indignation, she assailed me.
Grey. And did my lord, in this unseemly fashion,
Hear all with equal temper? Waked he not
With such a peal——
Ray. Thou know'st not what it is
To love like me—Long time (for passion now
Had shed o'er all her charms a brighter glow,
That like Jove's daughter most she looked, severe
In youthful beauty) long I lay, o'erawed
And silenced, as by some superior being;
Till, waked by pride, quick from the floor I sprung;
Warned her how she provoked my power;
'Twas great, 'twas now within these walls supreme;
I long had gently wooed her; but that love,
Though patient, would not always brook disdain.
Grey. 'Twas well: and what ensued?
Ray. Silence at first,
Then tears; bright drops, like May-morn dews, that fall
From the sweet blossomed thorn. Back in her chair
She sunk——Oh! had you seen her then, dissolved
In all the soft, the lovely languishment
Of woe; while at her knee, with countenance
Most piteous, stood her beauteous boy, and looked
As if each tear, which from his mother fell,
Would force a passage to his little heart—
I fled; else had I kneeled, and wept myself
As well as she.
Grey. O shame to manhood! suits
Such weakness with our hopes?
Ray. She must, she must,
Yes, Grey, she must be mine—and yet—yet fain
Would I persuade the fair one, not compel.
Grey. Say to what purpose, then, was seized her castle?
When she your suit rejected, then, perforce,
To claim her as the gift of royal favour!
To lord it here so long, and now to falter——
My lord, my lord, the mound is overleapt;
What now forbids but, without further pause,
To crop the rich, the golden fruits within?
Ray. Ungracious is the love reluctance yields;
And cold, cold even as marble, is the maid,
Who comes unwilling to another's arms.

Grey. In brief, would you partake the lady's bed?
Ray. What means the question?
Grey. Look on that, my lord:
Better reluctant come, than not at all.
Ray. How came this to your hand?
Grey. By one whose cares
Of thee demand no trivial recompence.
His wakeful eye it was descried the bearer;
Else had the watch, with all their vigilance,
Proved insufficient.
Ray. My better angel interposed.
Grey. Had this its purposed scope attained—my lord,
Were this but whispered in our Henry's ear—
He gave the royal nod, you say: true, he
Permitted, but thus far; that you should woo
The lady, and, her choice approving, wed;
No more. By us the public ear is told
She hath approved: our artifice hath spread
The rumour; and with some it is received,
That she is now your full espoused consort.
But truth, my lord, long cannot rest concealed;
It will abroad, of that be sure, in spite
Of all our studied wiles.
Ray. What's to be done?
Grey. 'Tis critical, and must be managed nicely——
But see, with Eleanor the countess comes;
And in her hand the young lord William. Here
Her custom is to walk; retire we now;
And thou observe the counsels of a friend.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter Lady SALISBURY, *Lord* WILLIAM, *and* ELEANOR.

Lady Sal. Talk'st thou of patience? What! the very roof,
That should protect and shelter me, become
My prison? Awed, and threatened, as I am,
By this intruder! Cruel destiny!
Had I not more than common griefs before?
Ele. In evil hour thy hospitable gates
Were opened to receive him.
Lady Sal. Unguarded that I was! But who could then
Foresee the purpose of his coming?
Ele. Who
Can think even yet, that, once repulsed, he e'er
Would thus presume?
Lady Sal. Is there no succour then?
No generous hand to vindicate my wrongs?
Oh Salisbury! Salisbury! Why, if yet thou liv'st——
Fond hope! he lives not, else with speed of thought
Would he repair to his afflicted Ela.
Ele. Why dearest lady, will you yield you up
A prey to purposed sorrow? Time is fruitful;
And the next hour, perhaps, may bring thee comfort.
Lady Sal. Day after day I have watched the joyless hours:
Night after night, when some fleet courier, sent
Before perchance, or letter, fraught with sweet
Assurance of his safety, might appear;
Five tedious moons have passed since first were told
The dismal tidings; no fleet courier, sent
Before, alas! nor letter, with such sweet
Assurance, yet appears—he's gone! he's lost!
And I shall never, never see him more.
Ele. Ah! suffer not the leaden hand of cold
Despair thus weigh thee down; I yet have hope.
Lady Sal. Away with hope, away! No, no; full loud,
As I remember, and outrageous blew
The storm, that even the solid fabric shook
Of yonder walls; deep-rooted oaks gave way;
Churches and spires were overturned; nor even
The peasant's humble roof escaped that hour.
The fleet, save only one, one luckless ship,
Have all returned; my lord nor hath been seen,
Alas! nor ever heard of since the storm.
Ele. Heaven visit her affliction, and bestow
That patience which she needs!
Lady Sal. No, Eleanor; no more shall he
To these deserted walls return. No more
Shall trophies, won by many a gallant deed,
Through the long hall in proud procession move;
No more fair Salisbury's battlements and towers
Re-echo to the approaching trumpet's voice.
Never, Oh! never more shall Ela run,
With throbbing bosom, at the well-known sound,
To unlock his helmet, conquest-plumed, to strip
The cuishes from his manly thigh, or snatch
Quick from his breast the plated armour, wont
To oppose my fond embrace—Sweet times, farewell!
Lord Wil. Mother, why do you speak so? you make me sad.
Lady Sal. It is too soon, my child, for thee to know
What sadness is.
Lord Wil. Will not my father come home soon?
Eleanor told me he would: she would not tell a lie.
Lady Sal. No, love.
Lord Wil. Then he will come.
Lady Sal. Sweet innocence! I fear he will not.
Lord Wil. I hope he is not sick.
Lady Sal. Go, lovely prattler, seek thy toys: go, go.
Lord Wil. I will, good mother; but don't be sad, or I shall be so too. [*Exit.*
Lady Sal. Sweet state of childhood! unallayed with cares;
Serene as spring-tide morn, new welcomed up
With bleat of lamb, with note of woodlark wild.
With riper years come passions turbulent
And rude, a baleful crew, unnumbered as
The forest leaves, that strew the earth in autumn.
When happiness is round thee, when thou art on
The lap of downy ease, when thou art cherished
In the fair bosom of unruffled joy,
Comes a fell hand, dashes thee rudely down,
And leaves thee to despair.
Ele. Cease,

Cease, lady, to afflict thee: Raymond may,
I trust he will, ere long, retire and give
Thee ease again—But hither comes his minion:
Much with his lord he can; and, as he lists,
To purposes of good or ill o'er-rules
His mind: if he accost thee, speak him gently.

Enter GREY.

Grey. As you are fair above all other women,
So may you lend to that I would implore
A gracious ear.
Lady Sal. Without more preface, briefly speak thy suit.
Grey. To love, but ne'er to reap of love the sweet
Returns, is sure the worst of ills.
Lady Sal. And what of that?
Grey. Though love denied, yet pity may do much
To sooth the wound that pity gives. In brief,
Thou much-revered! my suit is in behalf of Raymond.
Lady Sal. Then I will spare us both some cost
Of words: In brief, I love him not, nor pity;
So tell thy lord—I would be private—hence.
Grey. Your words are brief indeed; but of that kind
I dare not, must not bear my lord.
Lady Sal. Must not!
Grey. 'Tis cruel towards the man who loves so fondly.
Lady Sal. Doth he assume the specious name of love?
Love is a bright, a generous quality,
Heaven gave to noble minds; pure and unmixed
With every grosser stuff; a goodly flower,
Shoots up and blossoms in great souls alone.
Grey. The mind, the exalted soul thou nam'st, is his.
Lives there a youth more gentle of condition,
In fair accomplishments more graced, admired?
If beauty sway thy fond regards, if wealth,
I know not in fair England one with him
Can vie.
Lady Sal. Is then the star, the peerless star,
That late was gazed on, quite obscured? What though
He may have set, hath he not left a train
Of glory in the skies? The illustrious name
Of Salisbury yet survives. If wealth—but mark me;
Were he of all the wealth possessed from where
The East Indian bids the sun good-morrow, to where
The Atlantic, in her wide-extended lap,
Receives him setting; could he in each hand
A thousand sceptres place, not all should bribe
Me to his bed. No, Salisbury! thou hast been
The husband of my early love; with thee,
That love was all interred; and when I pluck
It forth again, gape wide that earth wherein
Thou liest, quick snatch me from the light of Heaven,
And swallow me within her lowest prison!
Grey. For pity's sake yet soften; for, Oh! sure
No former love could ever equal his;
No bosom boast the generous flame wherewith
Lord Raymond glows for thee, admired fair!
Lady Sal. Hear this, ye Heavens! and grant me patience—Where's
My people? where the freedom that I late
Was blest with? Wherefore is my palace thronged
With strangers? Why, why are my gates shut up
And fortified against their rightful mistress?
Grey. Madam———
Lady Sal. Is this the love he boasts?
Is this the fair accomplished, this the gentle youth!
Must I recall to mind—Came he not then,
Even while the memory of my dear loved lord
Was green, while sorrow yet was in my eyes?
Tears! ye will choke me——Came he not even then,
And broke in on my sorrows? Like a spoiler
He came, heaped up the measure of my woes,
Added new anguish to the afflicted heart,
And swelled the current of the widow's tears!
Grey. Madam, were he that spoiler thou proclaim'st,
He need not now thus humbly sue for that,
His power, long since, unasked, might have extorted.
Lady Sal. Ha! what art thou, that thus presum'st to threaten?
Extorted!—Hence, thou rude one, bolder even
Than him who calls thee slave.
Grey. Madam, you speak
As though you knew me not.
Lady Sal. I know thee well—
To what concerns lord Raymond I have spoke,
My final purpose fixed:
For thee, I charge thee shun my presence; hence!
And learn the distance that befits thy calling.
Grey. Not ere I speak more fully to the cause—
Nay, lady, look not on me with so stern
An eye, but give me patient hearing—
Lady Sal. No more; I'll hear no more.
Grey. Not hear me!—When next we meet—I will be heard. [*Exit.*
Lady Sal. What meant he, Eleanor?—I will be heard!
Ele. Alas! I know not: but a soul he hath,
Prompt and alert to acts of desperate thinking.
Hardly thou art beset; O lady, lend
An ear to what thy Eleanor would counsel.
When next he comes, (for that he hath obtained
Of Raymond leave to woo thee to his will,
I know) assume a gentler carriage. Seem
As though you may hereafter to his suit
Incline. Be ruled: necessity oft lends
A sanction to deceit. Demand a pause:
My lord of Salisbury's fate, yet unconfirmed,
Shall add thereto a seeming colour. Chance,
Meantime, that comes, or soon or late, to all,
To thee may come with unexpected succour.
Lady Sal. Sincerity,
Thou, spotless as the snowy-vested hill!
Forgive me, if, by lawless power constrained,
I turn this once from thy long-trodden path;

It must be so——
Oh, Salisbury! Salisbury! thou lamented shade!
Descend from those pure mansions, where thou sit'st
Exalted! hover o'er me: and, as thou
Wert wont, support me in this hour of trial!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Within the Castle.*

Enter RAYMOND *and* GREY.

Grey. AWAY, my lord, away with every care!
The conflict's past, and fortune is our own—
Defeated once, again I sought the fair;
I sought her, and prevailed.
Ray. By all the joys, the nameless joys, that on
The precious hour of soft compliance wait,
I will requite thee nobly. Say—for much
My wonder's moved—how hast thou found
Such grace? How wrought this change, thus sudden——thus
Unhoped, from her late bearing?
Grey. Uncertain is the sex—but that imports not.
It now remains, that proof, such proof be sought
Of Salisbury's fate, as, by minute detail
Of circumstances, shall with the lady gain
Prompt credence. Hear what I have devised, if you
Approve——

Enter a Knight.

Knt. My lord, two strangers I have brought,
Within the precincts of the castle found.
Ray. Say'st thou two strangers? of what quality?
Knt. With me they were of speech not over-prompt;
But, by their outward guise, they would seem men
As with some pious purpose charged. Severe
The younger seems, but of excelling form;
And wishes to recruit his wearied limbs
Beneath the friendly covert of this roof.
Ray. Conduct them to our presence. [*Exit. Knight.*
I were loth
The weary traveller to dismiss my gates,
Inhospitably rude; yet none I wish,
While we are yet suspended at the nod
Of peevish and uncertain chance, approach
These walls.

Re-enter Knight, with Strangers.

Whence, and what are you?
1*st Stran.* What we are,
These weeds, though we were silent, might unfold.
Alwin I am called, my fellow-traveller
Leroches. Our way was bent for Canterbury,
With purpose of a pious vow: o'ertaken
By weariness from travel, and desire
Of food, we journeyed hitherward, in hope
The lord of these fair turrets, first descried
At close of evening, might befriend our toils.
Ray. Whence have you come?
Alw. From France, not many days.
Ray. Say, what occasion may have called you hither?
Alw. To aid (Heaven prosper long) my country's weal.
Ray. You are a soldier then?
Alw. I have been such;
And to be such was my most dear inclining:
Smit with the love, even from my greenest youth,
Of honest arms. Some share of fame I too
Achieved—But ill the soldier it beseems
To trumpet his own praises.
Ray. Cease not so.
Though in the school of war untutored, much
It pleaseth me to hear the brave man's labours.
Alw. None but have heard how some time since was sent,
To claim of Lewis certain lands usurped,
A puissant force——
Ray. Were you therein employed?
Alw. Beneath the royal banner I enrolled,
As was my bent, in quest of fame.
Ray. Indeed!
Lord Salisbury then, perchance, of thee was known?
Alw. I knew him well; our liege's near ally,
And second to duke Richard in command.
Fast by his side was my allotted post
Upon the marshalled field: by him I fought,
For him had died.
Ray. Of him fame loudly speaks,
That in those wars he was a gallant man.
Alw. He was not wont, while others bravely fought,
To look inactive on.
Ler. A foe like him
France never knew, of all that warrior host,
Which, like an inundation, England poured
On her affrighted shores—
Ray. But what
Have proved his latter fortunes I should wish
To learn—Say, courteous stranger, if thou can'st,
Of this renowned lord: a rumour hath
Long since prevailed, that he on Gallia's coast
Was wrecked with all his crew.
Alw. What cause there was
Of such report, alas! these eyes have seen;
How true in part it is, too sure this tongue
Can testify.
Ray. I pray you, let us hear.
Alw. O'ercharged with human prey, fell war had ceased
To walk his wasteful round; well pleased we turn
Us from the blood-stained field; exulting each

With some rich spoil, trophies by valiant dint
Of arms achieved. Forthwith the eager host
Embark.
And now the chalky cliffs on Albion's coast
To our straining view appeared; the exulting
crew
With peals redoubled greet the well-known shore—
Ill-fated men! in vain the anxious dame
Oft mounts the high-raised tower, thence earnest
looks
Haply if her wished-for lord may come; in vain
The prattling boy oft asks her of his sire,
That never, never shall return.
Ray. Proceed,
Good stranger——what was the event?
Alw. Anon
The winds began to shift; up rose a storm,
And heaved the bosom of the troubled deep:
On the swoln billows sits enthroned grim Death,
And shakes his fatal dart.—The fleet, which late
In such fair order sailed, is now dispersed.
Before the wind we drove, left to the mercy
Of the wild waves, and all-disposing Heaven—
Oh my loved friends! associates of my toils!
Rescued in vain from war's wide wasteful arm,
Here end your labours! here, sweet life forsakes
you!
For me, a slender plank, next to the hand
Of some good angel, bore me to the shore.
Of full five hundred gallant lives, which late
Embarked, not one that fatal hour survived—
Ray. Save only thee?
Alw. Save only me.
Ray. Speak now secure, for nearly it concerns
My quiet—speak—was Salisbury of your crew?
Alw. Alas! too sure.
Ray. Enough—Thy courtesy
Of us may well, and shall be well requited.
Of this our friend accept mean time his prompt
Regards: anon we shall be glad to hold
Some farther converse with you.
[*Exeunt* ALW. LER. *and Knt.*
Grey. Of this stranger
What thinks my lord?
Ray. As of an angel, sent
To waft me on his wings strait to the summit
Of all my wishes—With what a gallant grace
He bears him!—Much I wish to hear him speak
Again—to hear the battles he has fought,
And all the story of his life and fortunes.
Grey. That we shall learn hereafter: but 'tis
meet
That he to lady Salisbury first unfold
The sum of what he here reported.
Ray. Methinks
I now behold her, like some full-blown flower,
The fairest of the garden, late o'ercharged
With showers, her head declining sad, whilst he
Recounts the story of her Salisbury's fate.
Would she were mine without a tear;
Without a sigh.—But she must weep; she must;
Thereon my all depends—Oh wayward sorrow!
That wounds—yet, wounding, heals the lover.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to an Apartment. Lady* SALISBURY *reclining on a Couch.*

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. Grief, that of time's fixed periods for
repose
Takes small account, hath lulled her wearied
senses—
Where'er thou dwell'st, Oh Peace! with azure
eyes
Serene; or if in stately-structured dome,
Or thatched-roofed cottage low, or in cool grot
By fountain clear thou sit'st, or if perchance
Along the silver brook's green liveried verge
Reclined, approach, thou rosy-dimpled fair!
Leave thy sweet haunts awhile; and with that
balm
Which sooths the woe-struck heart, await her
slumbers.
The hour approaches, when, as is her custom,
She seeks the hallowed shrine, and pious wakes
The voice of pure devotion to high heaven:
I'll thither, and expect her—but she wakes——
How fares the mistress of my best regards?
Proved her slumbers sweet as were my wishes?
Lady Sal. Sweet, sweet, my Eleanor; so sweet,
oh! would
I ne'er had waked. I dreamt, as wont on him
To dream, that I beheld his gracious form,
My bosom's lord: a while he stood, and seemed
On me to smile; then flew to my embraces——
Ah fleeting ecstacy!—'twas but a dream.

Enter a Knight.

Knt. Thy favour, lady; I am charged with
news,
That much imports thy hearing: summon up
Thy powers; two strangers late have come, of
whom
One brings assured tidings of thy lord.
Lady Sal.——My lord——what——speak—
Knt. He saith he knew my lord
Of Salisbury well; that he was of his crew;
And with that peer embarked from France.
Lady Sal.—But—well—from France.——
Knt. Lady, all must have their
Sorrows. Strait uprose a mighty tempest,
Dispersed the fleet o'er all the seas——
The storm—the fatal wreck—of all
The stranger gives most circumstantial proof.
Ele. Alas the tidings!—Dearest lady, give
Thy sorrows vent; thy bosom's overfraught,
And will find ease by letting loose its woes.
Lady Sal.——Well, well——
Then he is lost, and all, all is despair.
Though languid, yet was hope not quite extinct—
Where, where's the stranger? Seek him, haste,
that I
May hear him fully speak of all. Methinks
[*Exit Knt.*
'Twill be a desperate sort of soothing: to hang
Upon each sound, catch every circumstance
Of the sad story; and wring my aching heart,

Till I am even surfeited with sorrow.
Ele. Behold! the stranger comes——

Enter ALWIN.

Lady Sal. Bear, bear me up, good Heaven!
That I may give full measure to my sorrow.
Alw. Thy angel hover o'er thee, and support thee. [*In an under voice.*
Lady Sal. The dead ere now
Have burst the prisons of the close-pent grave,
And apparitions, strange of faith, appeared;
Perhaps thou too art but a shadow; let
Me grasp thee, for, as I have life, I think——
It is, it is my Salisbury! O my lord!
Lord Sal. My bosom's joy!
Lady Sal. And dost thou live indeed?
Amazing Providence! He does! he does!
Look! look! behold him, Eleanor! behold
The gracious form! The vision was not vain.
[ELE. *goes aside.*
Lord Sal.—And art thou, art thou then—
Lady Sal. O my full bosom!
Lord Sal. The same, by time or circumstance unchanged?
Lady Sal. Unhoped reverse! Hence, hence all former woes—
My lord! my life! hence, hence, be swallowed up
All griefs, and lost in this most blissful hour.
Lord Sal. Thou art, I see, thou art the same, thou must—
Thou hast not yielded to another lord?
Lady Sal. Another lord! and could you, did you think
'Twas so?
Lord Sal. Thus spoke loud rumour on my way:
Indeed, I scarce could think it.
Lady Sal. Oh! 'twas foul!
Indeed thou should'st not think it.
Lord Sal. Ever dear!
No more; my soul is satisfied, and thinks
Of nothing now but happiness and thee.
Lord Sal. Say, then, thou wanderer—Oh! I have much
Of thee to ask, thou much to hear: how is't
I see thee, see thee thus? Where hast thou been?
What secret region hath so long detained thee?
Lord Sal. O thou! whose image, ever in my view,
Sustained me, angel-like, against the rough
And rapid current of adversity;
Should I recount the story of my fortunes,
Each circumstance beginning from that day
We parted, to this hour, thine ear would be
Fatigued; the stars, ere I had ended, cease
To twinkle; and the morning's sun break in
Upon the unfinished tale; suffice it thee
To know the sum:
For England we embarked, when, black and foul,
A tempest rising, quick upturned the seas,
And cast me forth upon a hostile shore.
Why need I tell thee, love, how, in disguise,
On foot, alone, I've toiled my weary way,
Through dreary vale, o'er mountain wild; my bed
Oft of the blasted heath, whilst o'er my limbs
Damp night hath shaken her cold, dewy wings,
And the chill northern gale hath spent his breath
On my defenceless head?
Through what variety of strange events
I've come, heaven-guided, to behold, once more,
My wife? But, ah! my son! our only hope!
My boy! what, what of him?
Lady Sal. Dear to these eyes
As is the new-born light of heaven! he lives;
Is well—But say, my lord, what would thy coming,
Thus unattended, thus disguised?
Lord Sal. How I escaped from hard captivity,
And Gallia's coast, more leisure shall inform you.
My friend, sir Ardolph, had but just embraced me,
(The first glad transports of our meeting o'er)
When, with an honest tear, the good old man
In brief disclosed what fame had now reported;
That thou wert soon, or hadst, ere this, espoused
Earl Hubert's nephew, and sole purposed heir.
Lady Sal. Oh, most unhallowed, thus to abuse
My unattainted love! And could my lord——
Lord Sal. Yet hear me. Strait I grasped my sword;
And, single as I was, had sallied forth,
Had not my friend's sage counsels interposed.
By Ardolph swayed, I veiled me as thou seest;
And, with a sharer in the dark intent,
Set forward on my way for Salisbury castle:
A simple hind's low cottage, not far hence,
Received us. Here, fast by the greenwood side,
We lodged; resolved, ourselves unknown, to prove
What doubtful rumour only had proclaimed.
With this intent, at dusk of evening we
Forsook the cot.
Lady Sal. There needs no more: Heaven saw
Me, and was touched with pity. What a change
This hour! Sequestered as I was, even like
The votarist; perhaps the destined prey
Of rude desire.
Lord Sal. O for to-morrow's slow returning night!
Lady Sal. Say, what of that, my lord?
Lord Sal. Revenge, revenge—
I'll tell thee. Soon as the dark usurping night
Shall chace to-morrow's sun adown the skies,
Know, Ardolph, with a chosen troop of friends,
To that same cottage, armed, shall come——

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. My lord, I hear the approach of hasty steps.
Lord Sal. Farewell, my best:
Nor peace nor sleep shall visit me, till I
Have given thee freedom, and revenged our wrongs.

Enter Knight.

Knight. Lord Raymond, sir, forthwith expects your coming.
Lord Sal. I will attend him. Lady, fain would I

Have told thee less ungracious things: but all
Have their appointed trials. Learn to bear;
Convinced, the hand of Heaven, when it inflicts,
Prepares us oft for some superior good.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Within the Castle.*

Enter RAYMOND *and* GREY.

Ray. I see nor cause my joys to check; nor boast
As yet securely.
Grey. Think, that Hope, the young,
The merry-minded fair, exalts us oft,
To make our fall the greater.
Ray. Why this cold,
This prudent maxim?
Grey. Mark the wary falcon:
Forward he shoots his piercing eye, and kens
The quarry from afar; like his be thine.
Perhaps, my lord, mine are but nicer fears,
Waked in a heart o'er anxious of thy welfare:
Yet hath the younger of those strangers raised
In me suspicion of alarming hue,
Lest, underneath this honest guise, there lurk
Some subtle mischief. Lady Salisbury saw him:
Their conference, as 'twas long, so was it held
In secret—would we had been present.
Ray. Granting
Our presence had been seemly—wherefore spoke
You not this counsel ere they met?
Grey. I saw not then the danger.
His honest carriage, and the recent change
Within her mind, had lulled each nicer fear.
Ray. 'Till now unmoved, say what hath waked suspicion?
Grey. I know not well. Would she were firmly thine,
Beyond the reach and grasp of wayward fortune.
The knight, whose office was to introduce
Him to the countess, he dismissed, ere they
Approached the apartment.
Ray. Indeed!
Grey. This too: Is it not strange, though night, and this
Thy proffered roof, invited his sojourn,
He would not wait the approach of morning?
Ray. Are they gone?
Grey. Amid the unguarded joy
Which held us, they escaped, unheeded.

Enter Second Knight.

Knight. My lord,
Two strangers, it is said, in palmers' weeds
Attired, have lodged since morning in a hut;
You may have marked it, in the darksome glen,
Near to the forest of wild oaks, just where
The stream white rushes down the shelving cliff.
Ray. Since morning, say'st thou?
Knt. Further I have learned:
Their guise, as doth appear from certain words
O'erheard, is borrowed with design to mask
Some secret purpose. [*Exit.*
Grey. It must be so:
Their close-concerted arts have foiled our caution.
Ray. They scarce have measured half the precincts yet;
Send forth my knights, we will pursue them.
Grey. No: One way there is, and only one—
But hence;
I hear the countess——She loves lord William well:
And much, much will a pious mother, sure,
To save an only son. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter Lady SALISBURY *and* ELEANOR.

Lady Sal. In spite of this event, this blest event,
That hath restored the lord of this fond bosom,
Yet is my mind with doubts and fears disturbed;
With images and wild conceits, of form
Unsightly; such as hover oft in dreams
About the curtains of the sick.——Alas!
Whilst others joy within the friendly roof,
Of night regardless, and the storm that beats
Without, he struggles hard; or hies, at best,
To the dark shelter of the dripping wood.
Besides, what unknown perils may assail him,
Unaided thus against whatever ill.
Would he had waited the return of morn!
Ele. The night is dark indeed, the tempest high;
But hear me, lady, hear a pious lesson,
Which thy own lips to me have oft repeated:
There is a power unseen, whose charge it is,
With ever wakeful eye, to watch the good;
And peaceful ever is that breast, which trusts
In his angelic guard.—The hand
Of Heaven, that hitherto hath been his shield,
Will minister safe convoy to his steps,
Though night and darkness shed their thickest gloom.
Lady Sal. Misdeem not of my fears; or think I speak,
As over diffident of that same power
Thou nam'st, whose all-surveying eye wakes ever
Clear, unobstructed, either when the sun
Shrowds in night's shadowy veil, or when at noon
He shines revealed on his meridian throne.
But where's the bosom throbs not, if it hopes?
Hope ever is attended with a train
Of wakeful doubts; and where the sweet nymph harbours,
There flutters also her pale sister, Fear.——
But hence, as was our purpose, to the shrine;
Where, as is meet, for my dear lord restored,

I will with grateful adoration——

Enter Lord WILLIAM.

Lord Wil. Mother, I fain would know that stranger, who he is, that just now met me.

Lady Sal. And wherefore wouldst thou know him, love?

Lord Wil. Gentle he was, and mild; not like those grim-faced ones I see here every day: and such kind things he did, as make me love him dearly.

Lady Sal. Say, what were they?

Lord Wil. He kissed me, stroked my head, and patted me upon the cheek, and said——

Lady Sal. What said he, sweet?

Lord Wil. He said, 'Heaven bless thy beauteous head, sweet boy.'

Enter GREY.

Grey. Permit me, honoured dame; I have a word
Or two, that claims thine ear.

Lady Sal. Then but a word;
My present cares ill brook long interruption.

Grey. Behold the blossom of the spring, how fair!
Yet in his velvet bosom lurks the worm,
And hourly wastes him of his choicest sweets;
Nor less a foe is slow consuming grief
To beauty.——
You may remember, when we last conferred,
The gracious purport of your words to what
Concerned lord Raymond, when you taught his suit
To hope a prosperous issue; thus by me he speaks:
In the recesses of the hallowed shrine,
Where with him stands the sable-vested priest,
He waits thy coming; there, with pious vows
Exchanged, even now to consecrate thee his.—
May every rose-lipped son of light look down,
And smile propitious on the joyful hour!

Lady Sal. Is this a season meet for such a theme?

Grey. For gracious acts all seasons should be meet;
Heaven shews the bright example; ever prompt
To incline, when virtue lifts her suppliant eye.
But say that for the present he forbore
His earnest suit, say, shall to-morrow make
Him happy? or to-morrow's night, perchance?
Or—what shall be the bright succeeding day?

Lady Sal. I know not; nor will I submit me or
To promised league or tie; no, though thou shouldst plead
Even with an angel's tongue.

Grey. You will not, lady!——
Know, then, this night, this hour must make thee his.

Lady Sal. This night! this hour!——Who'll make me his this hour?

Grey. A power, my lady, thou shalt learn to fear;
Force, force superior, that, with giant hand,
Plucks even the monarch from his throne—disrobes
The virgin of her honour; while distress,
With streaming eyes and loose dishevelled hair,
Holds forth her supplicating hands in vain.

Lady Sal. I know the monster thou wouldst fright me with;
But I despise his power.—Hast thou ne'er heard?
Learn, then, of me a truth, a golden truth,
Graved on the registers of hoary time:
Virtue, with her own native strength upheld,
Can brave the shock of ruffian force, unmoved
As is the rock, whose firm-set base not all
The tumult of the western surge can shake,
Though the fierce winds uplift him to the stars.

Grey. This is a truth, indeed, may hold a place
On fancy's tinsel page:—What will avail
Thy virtue's boasted powers, when thou shalt see,
Torn from thy feeble arms, all thou hold'st dear?
Yes, lady, thy lord William, thy loved son!

Lady Sal. Ha!—Save him, Heaven! He dare not sure——and yet——

Grey. Think, lady, think upon thy son.

Lady Sal. Protect
Him, O ye powers celestial!——angels watch
His steps, and hover round his harmless head.

Grey. Say, will you to the altar, lady?

Lady Sal. Sooner to my grave.

Grey. Thy obstinacy on his head—Who waits?

Enter a Ruffian.

Lady Sal. What wouldst thou here? Hence, execrable wretch!
Thou mak'st my blood run cold.

Lord Wil. Oh mother, I am frightened.

Lady Sal. Dearest lamb!—
Hast thou no terrors for thyself?—Oh, Salisbury!—
Hast thou no fears? Oh, I could tell thee what,
Like thunder, would appal thy hearing, shrink
Up every nerve within thy blasted frame,
And make thee nothing.——Fear not, love.

Grey. Think not
With empty sounds to shake our purpose; say,
Will you comply?

Lady Sal. My little innocent!
Thou dar'st not, fell as is thy nature—My love!
My life!

Grey. Convey lord William hence.

Lord Wil. Oh, save me, mother, save me!

Lady Sal. Forbear your impious hands! forbear!

Grey. Or to the altar, or, by all therein,
I swear this moment wrests him from thy view.

Lady Sal. Inhuman that thou art, can nothing move
Thee?—Oh! those little harmless looks would preach
Even to the hungry lion, make him pause,
And turn his rage to pity.

Grey. Nay, madam——

Lady Sal. Forbear, and I will go—Whither!
Distraction! I will rouse
The castle.——Help!—My cries shall tear the roofs!
Help, help, oh, help!—the mother and the son!

Grey. Your cries are vain.——

Enter Lord SALISBURY.

Lord Sal. Hold!—What is it ye do?
Grey. He here again!
Lord Sal. Speak, lady! would these men have wronged thee?
Pale fear is on thy cheek!
[ELE. *removes Lord* WIL.—*Exeunt* GREY *and Ruf.*
Lady Sal. Cold horror hath o'ercome me.
Lord Sal. Ever loved!
Sure thou wert sore distressed! I heard thee cry.
Lady Sal. Ah, sore distressed indeed! the hand of peril
Was on me; violence and murder stared
Me full in all their hideous forms!
Lord Sal. Gracious powers! my fear, my fear, new waked;
For thee it was, as Heaven decreed, that urged
Me back, and brought me to thy timely rescue.
Lady Sal. 'Twas Heaven, indeed, that brought thee hither now!
Yet I have wondrous fears—thou art but one,
Surrounded by a legion of those fiends.

Enter RAYMOND, GREY, *and armed Knights.*

Ray. [*As he enters.*] Where is the audacious man, that hath presumed
To question with such bold intrusion?
Lord Sal. If him you mean,
Who took the part of feeble innocence
Against the ruffian's arm—he's here.
Ray. Which of you, slaves, have suffered him to enter?
Knt. My lord, he bade us to unbar the gates,
Driven by the tempest, as he said, to seek
The proffered shelter he had late declined;
Pardon, if, deeming him your honoured guest,
We answered him with prompt compliance.
Ray. Say, what dark purpose is it hath brought thee hither?
Confess thee true, or, by the blessed saints,
Thou shalt have cause to mourn the hour which moved
Thee, daring as thou art, to approach our castle.
Lord Sal. To other regions, other climes, with threats
Like these, where proud oppression lords it: here
The free-born subject knows not what it is
To be in awe of arbitrary power.
Ray. I will know what thou art.
Lord Sal. Even what thou seest
Am I; a man not prompt to offer wrong,
Yet of that frame, I brook not to behold
A noble lady made the prey of ruffians.
Ray. Intruder, bold as thou art officious, wherefore
Shouldst thou concern thee in this lady's cause?
Lord Sal. The cause of innocence should be the cause
Of all. Confess thee, lord! was it nobly done,
To let these bold, those rude assailants loose,
And give a sanction to such foul proceedings?
Ray. Pilgrim, hast thou forgot thee? Who am I?
Lord Sal. Who art thou! Ask, ask thy deeds,
And they will answer. The breath of fame hath told
How base they have been; they are gone abroad,
And the pure air is tainted with their foulness.
Ray. Presuming slave! whoe'er thou art, for thy
Unlicenced bearing dearly shalt thou answer.
Hence with the bold defamer; bind him fast;
Be instant death his lot, should he resist——
Seize him, I say!
Lady Sal. Oh! spare him, spare——
Lord Sal. Out, servile ministers!
Ye know not who it is ye would attempt—
Oppressive lord! whom nor the sacred bond
Of justice, nor of hospitality
Controls, regard me! while with sight
More dire than e'er of Gorgon feigned, I strike thee——
Now, Raymond, if thou hast of noble fire
One spark within thee, draw thy sword; come on,
And meet my arm; wake all that's man within thee.
Come on—— [*Flings off his disguise.*
'Tis Salisbury, Salisbury calls thee to the strife.
Lady Sal. Heaven shield my dearest lord!
Ray. Salisbury! then what am I!——
Lord Sal. Vengeance at length is armed; thy fate cries out,
And honour, injured honour, claims aloud
Her victim.
Ray. Secure thou seem'st of fate, but fall who will
A victim, let the sword—— [*Drawing.*
Grey. What would you do?——
[*Aside, holding his arm.*
Look not to know him, all may yet be well—
Be not abused, my lord: this is a plot,
Devised with purpose to effect thy ruin.
Lady Sal. Ha! what dost say?
Grey. Believe him not, my lord. He! he lord Salisbury!
'Tis all a trick, an artful cheat, and he
A liar traced—
Lord Sal. Nay then, my sword——
Dishonest knights!
[*Going to attack* RAY. *he is disarmed.*
Lady Sal. Now, by these tears, do him no violence!
He is, he is my husband.
Grey. Regard her not:
He hath conspired against thee, and demands
The hand of justice.
Lord Sal. Will ye not ope, ye Heavens, and instant send
Your thunder to my aid? Unhand me, villains!
Or, by the powers of vengeance, I will dash
You piece-meal!
Ray. Bear the traitor hence, and bind
His stubborn arms: bestow the lady safe
Within her chamber.
Lady Sal. I will not part my husband—Hold your hands—
They overpower me——barbarous, barbarous men!

Lord Sal. Ruffians, forbear your more than impious hands!
Lady Sal. Yet hear me, Raymond—by these streaming eyes,
Oh! hear me yet—
Ray. Away—

Lord Sal. Slaves! murderers!
[*They are forced off severally.*
Ray. Away with him, away! honour is lost,
And shame must henceforth be my only portion.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter RAYMOND *and* GREY.

Grey. My lord, you waste the precious hours in cold
Irresolute delays: nor circumstance
Nor time admit of long deliberation.
Ray. Would I had never seen this fatal mansion!
Grey. A sorry wish, my lord. Behold the fierce,
The lordly ranger of the desert wild;
No sluggish fear he knows; he pauses not,
Nor looks behind, but onward speeds him till
He gripes the trembling prey: be ever thus
The youth, whom thirst of love and beauty fires.
Ray. Away; call forth my train—nay, murmur not:
Command that, ere the lark proclaim the morn,
They hold them each prepared. Here I will rest,
If rest I can, this night; to-morrow's sun
Shall see me fled for ever from these walls.
Grey. Go——I detain thee not.
Summon thy train, mount the swift steed, away;
The gates shall open to thy flight. But know,
That shame and scorn shall follow at thy heels.
Yet worse; the insulted baron next pursues thee:
Nor rocks, nor mountains, nor opposing seas
Shall stay him; but with more than mortal rage
He shall assail thee.
Ray. Are there no other means?
Grey. None.
Ray. No other way but murder? Horrid thought!
Oh! Grey, if e'er the dagger's drawn, I feel
Such perturbation, here! what then, oh what
Shall prove my portion when 'tis steeped in blood?
The drops can from the point be wiped away,
But never from the mind.
Grey. Lift, lift thine eye,
And let it gaze upon the bright reward.
Riches and honours grace the swelling act,
While beauty, like the ruby-crowned morn,
When first she appears upon the mountain top,
Comes smiling on to meet you. These are objects,
My lord, would irritate the palsied arm
Itself of fear; excite the lagging blood,
And spur it on to acts of noble daring.
Ray. What would you do? Think—Sallsbury is a name
Of all beloved, of more than vulgar sway
Throughout the land; a deed, unauthorised
As this, shall never 'scape the arm of justice.
Grey. Such wary counsels shall our steps o'errule,
As may deride suspicion—One there is,
A knight among thy vassal train, perhaps
Unnoted: soft of speech he is, and fair;
But of a heart that mocks at human feelings:
Him I have sounded with reserve; and find
Him not unapt to this our secret purpose.
But say, what recompence, what high reward
Awaits the man, whose arm for thee enacts
Such signal service?
Ray. Half my fortunes——all
Would I on him bestow, whose prosperous arts
Should make the fair one mine.
Grey. She shall be thine.
Ray. But say, my friend—what tale, what rare device
Should fruitful art explore, that might amuse
Her just suspicions?
Grey. Innocence! the mask
Of innocence, and counterfeited sorrow——

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. If beauty in distress, if dignity,
Now sinking into ruin, can assail
Thy pity, come, oh! come, and weep to see—
Grey. The countess, I suppose.
Ele. My lord, my lord,
'Twould melt the savage into human softness,
And make him howl forth pity, to behold her—
Oh! did you see her, pale, disordered as
She runs, now calling wildly on her lord,
Again upon her son, again on thee!
Sometimes, alas! she beats her beauteous bosom;
Anon, in frantic mood, tears from her head
The silken hairs, which fall in heaps unheeded;
Wrings her white hands, and weeps and raves by turns,
Till nature, spent and wearied, gives her pause.
Ray. Away: we will speak comfort to her sorrows. [*Exit* ELE.
Wretch that I am! But I will yield them up;
Son, husband——all I will resign, if so
I may appease her phrenzy.
[*Going, is detained by* GREY.
Grey. Be not rash.
Short is the date of every stronger passion;
Unstayed the mind of woman; by a breath
Oft agitated, by a breath composed——
Yield them, my lord! it would be madness, ruin.

Ray. Whichever way I turn, it is destruction.
Grey. O'ercast with fear, thine eyes take nothing in
But fancies of the sickliest hue——For shame!
Rouse, rouse, my noble lord; awake, shake off
This weakness. Pleasure must be wooed with toil.
Go to her, solace her; if that should fail,
Permit her, as by stealth, to visit Salisbury;
At sight of him this tumult shall subside.
Ray. With love and pity I am torn. In vain
I strive; too far I am advanced in error.
Oh! will no hand disclose a path, whereby
I may return? Accursed be thou, myself;
And doubly be accursed that fatal hour
I turned mine ear to thy destructive counsels!
[*Goes out in great agitation.*
Grey. [*Alone.*] My hopes begin to totter.
If he resign them, Salisbury is appeased,
And he retires: what then becomes of Grey?
On me, on me, of course, the tempest falls.
That must not be—he goes to see her now—
Who knows what new-sprung hope may follow thence?
There is a charm in soft distress, that works
Upon the soul like magic; causing love
Oft times, as oft exciting loose desire——
It is most apt. I will, before he goes
To her, explore each access to his heart;
Attack each avenue that leads to virtue;
Try every winning art that may assist
The loose contagion: should he seize her beauties,
Farewell remorse; then dies the injured husband. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Opens and discovers Lord* SALISBURY *on the ground, in chains.*

Enter LEROCHES.

Ler. Alas! on the cold ground! I fear his wrongs
Have made him mad; I heard him rage—My lord—
Rise, rise, my lord, and speak to thy Leroches.
Lord Sal. —Thou art unkind.
Ler. Oh! would to Heaven that I could ease thy troubles!
Lord Sal. I had in sweet oblivion lost myself
And every care; why hast thou called me back
To hated recollection?—Oh! my wrongs,
My wrongs! they now come rushing o'er my head—
Again, again, they wake me into madness.
Ler. Thy wrongs shall be revenged.
Lord Sal. Torn from them both!
——Let me not think.
Ler. Think on our friends, my lord:
Perhaps, even now, they are at hand; and soon
Will thunder at the gates.
Lord Sal. Is it possible?
Or do my eyes but false persuade me to it?—
In trammels, and within my walls! beneath
That roof where I am sole invested lord!—
Ler. Look, behold.
Lord Sal. I see thou art dishonoured.
Ler. 'Tis the will
Of Heaven, and I submit me to my fortunes.
Lord Sal. How cam'st thou hither?
Ler. By command, as I
Suppose, of—but I will not name him.
Lord Sal. Blasts
Upon him! Didst thou see my wife?
Ler. No, my lord.
Lord Sal. Nor my son?
Ler. My lord, I saw not either.
Lord Sal. Nor of either heard?
Ler. No, my good lord;—I trust that they are safe.
Lord Sal. Hear me, sweet Heaven! ye throned powers above,
Dread arbiters of mortal doings, hear—
Dry not instant up the springs of life,
But grant me measure of revenge! Unbind,
For pity, these dishonoured limbs unbind,
And give this monster to my willing arm:
If I not firmly gripe, if I not tear
With more than savage force his hated form—

Enter a Knight.

Traitor!
What hast thou done? Bring forth my honoured dame—
Haste, bring her instant; give her to my arms,
Uninjured, undefiled, or, by the souls
Of the most holy and unspotted saints—
Spare me, good Heaven—I am, I am to blame.
Imports thy coming aught with me?
Knt. Behold
In me thy better angel, come to warn
Thee of unguarded danger—Oh! my lord,
My lord! beware of horrid treachery—
Whatever knight thou not'st, that, traitor-like,
Approacheth thee with smiles; that, with the charm
Of honeyed speech, would practise on thy hearing,
Of him beware—They seek thy ruin; chance
Betrayed their purpose; I was touched with pity.
[*Going.*
Lord Sal. Nay, go not yet.
Knt. Suspicion's on the watch;
My thoughts are scarce my own.
Lord Sal. It is for guilt,
Not conscious honesty, to taste of fear.
Knt. Know then, my lord, though strict necessity
Enrolls me in the list of Raymond's train,
Yet doth my soul abhor the unhallowed service.
Lord Sal. Be thou but faithful, and discover all
Thou know'st, so shalt thou thrive in Salisbury's favour.
Knt. Fear not my faith. But shall lord Salisbury prove
A friend indeed? For I shall need thy arm
And interest both against so great a foe.
Lord Sal. Now by my honour, ever yet held dear,
I will protect thee, 'gainst whatever foe.
Knt. Morton desires but this—Know then, that late
As by the western porch I stood, my ear

Was met by certain voices: straight I turned;
And through the crevice of the adjoining door
Was known that same insidious knight and Grey,
In low, but earnest converse. Thee they named;
And I could hear the latter, whilst he said,
'A dagger is the best. With honest smiles,
'And fair-instructed speech you must essay him.
'Thy peace and fortunes on this feat depend.'
Lord Sal. I thank thee for this warning; and ere long
Shall recompence thy love.
Mor. Had I the power
To serve thee, as the will, thou should'st not wear
Those marks of shame—But oh! the unhappy countess!
Lord Sal. What, what of her!
Mor. Alas! to think the pangs
She feels this moment, torn as she hath been,
By rude barbarians, from her lord and son.
Lord Sal. But is she safe? Hath not dishonour reached her?
Mor. Oh may she never know dishonour!—Yet Lord Raymond—
Lord Sal. Perish the detested name
For ever! for it makes my blood outcourse
The wholesome speed of nature.
Mor. It is true,
He holds her in his power—
Lord Sal. He does, he does:
And I do live to know it!
Mor. But I trust
He will not use that power—Farewell, my lord;
I will away, and gather all I can
Of their condition.
Lord Sal. Thou shalt win my love.
See, see my wife, oh! see her if thou canst;
Speak comfort to her. Say, the only pangs I feel,
Are for her safety. Bid her hope for timely aid;
But to remember still, the virtuous mind
Will welcome death itself before dishonour.
Mor. To see her, is a task I fear will foil
My utmost; but no art shall be untried.
[*Exit* MOR.
Lord Sal. Is there no way to freedom?—Oh my friends!
My friends! Haste, Ardolf, haste to my revenge!
Ler. Thy fierce impatience, thy untoward will,
It is, my lord, that hath betrayed our safeties.
To Ardolf deaf, thou would'st not wait his succours:
Deaf, too, to me, thou would'st approach the castle.
Lord Sal. Fear not: this stranger, like Heaven's brighter star,
Hath risen propitious—Heavens! but what of that?
My wife!—perhaps, even now within the gripe
Of fell incontinence she struggles—Beware
That thought—down, down, or I shall rage to madness.
Ler. My lord, he would not—
Lord Sal. Hark!—
Ler. He would not, dare not, sure: or if he dare,
Her inborn dignity, her virtue—
Lord Sal. Peace!
Lady Sal. Hold off your brutal hands!
[*From without.*
Lord Sal. 'Tis she! 'tis she!
The slave assails her—Let me forth—
Slaves! murderers! instant let me forth, or I—
Lady Sal. Hast thou no touch of pity?
Lord Sal. Horror! horror!
Out hair! out by the roots! nor let a grain
Be left to tell there grew such honours there.
Lady Sal. O, my lord! my lord!—
Lord Sal. By Heaven I will not be restrained—
[LER. *strives to stay him.*
Nor all your bolts, nor barriers, all the powers
Of hell united shall withhold me from her—
Ler. Preserve him, Heaven! I fear
Some act of horrid import—Oh! she comes!
Wild, wild as the rough ocean vexed with storms.
[*Bursts forth.*

Enter Lady SALISBURY, ELEANOR, *and* MORTON.

Lady Sal. I will have vengeance. Such an outrage—No,
I will not weep. They think I have no means:
'Tis false: I will resume a spirit.
Ele. Alas, alas!
Lady Sal. I had a son: sweet William!—thou hast heard
Him prattle; there was music on his tongue.
Ele. Can Heaven behold such crimes, and not awake
Its thunders?
Lady Sal. Weep'st thou? I can weep myself;
I have some cause——He is my husband—who
Will part us?—Cold, cold, cold. The rains beat sore,
And the winds make a noise; 'tis a rough night;
No little star to guide his darkling steps——
The heavens do rain down pity for me.
Ele. Rave
Not thus, dear lady; oh! be comforted.
Lady Sal. Yes, yes; I know; these trifles have disturbed me,
The bird is rifled.
Poor flutterer! oh! it was naught to spoil
Her of her little hope——Did'st thou not see
Her valiant mate, how fierce he shook his plumes,
And pecked at them? Did he not?—He had saved
His mistress from the spoilers, but they snared him.
Lord Sal. [*Entering.*] Where is the slave? I will not brook delay.
Lady Sal. He's come! he's come——Now, ruffians, I have found
Him, we will die together ere you part us!
Lord Sal. Hell! what are your blackest horrors to this?
Lady Sal. We will have justice,—bury Grey alive.
Lord Sal. She's lost!
Lady Sal. Say you!—Put Raymond to the torture.
Lord Sal. I will tear him joint by joint.
Lady Sal. But they will part us——

They come—You shall not—no; no power on earth
Shall force me—Now they pull; hold, hold, my lord;
Yet closer——now, now, now. [*Faints.*
Lord Sal. My wife, My Ela!
Lost as thou art, oh! do not leave me.
Mor. Distressful sight! Oh, most inhuman Grey!
Ele. Nature, my lord, unequal to the conflict,
Has for a space retired within herself;
But shortly to return. This interval
Of death-like quiet will, I trust, recall
Her safer senses——She revives.
Lady Sal. But this is strange——
Ele. My lord,
Speak to her; sooth her, and she will be calm.
Lord Sal. Speak to her, sooth her——what have I with her? with thee?
Oh agonizing hour! Had I but perished
In the salt wave that buried my loved friends,
It had been well—'Twas cruelty to save me.
Lady Sal. Am I indeed awake?—Let me stand up—
What is the matter?
Lord Sal. My poor, injured wife!
Lady Sal. Nay, but inform me, I am over doubtful;
I would believe, I know—If what I now
Behold be not a dream, you are my husband?
Lord Sal. The wretch that was so called.
Lady Sal. Alas! alas!
Sure I have been afflicted sore—My lord!
My life!—why dost thou start from me? Oh take
Me to thy arms, for I have need of comfort!
Lord Sal. Art thou not undone?
Lady Sal. Indeed I have wept.
Lord Sal. Lost, stained, dishonoured by a villain!
Lady Sal. How,
My lord! Think'st thou that I have other wrongs
To weep, than thou hast seen?
Lord Sal. I heard thee cry.
Lady Sal. I know not what I did—Dishonoured—O!
The thought wakes every pulse to indignation.
Lord Sal. What! did he not assail thee?
Lady Sal. No—Assail me!
Lord Sal. Then thou art safe, thy honour unassayed?
Lady Sal. So witness Heaven!
Lord Sal. The God of Heaven be praised!
Lady Sal. —And couldst thou think so meanly of me?—Oh!
I had let the life-blood from this bosom forth,
Ere I had brooked dishonour.
Lord Sal. Best of thy sex—thy cries like daggers pierced me:
And fearful fancy pictured such a scene,
As hurried me to madness—But thou art safe,
My wife is safe! and I am blest again.
Lady Sal. My heart o'erjoys—Then wherefore do I fear?
Lord Sal. I had forgot—our son; for him thou fear'st!
Lady Sal. Not only for my son, but for thyself,
Thy precious self, I trembled—Oh, this fiend!
The slaves and agents of destruction, black
And bold, are stationed round him, and but wait
Their master's nod.
Ler. Would we were safe bestowed
Without this fearful prison!
Lady Sal. Would we were!—
Think, think, my lord, is there no way of flight?
Lord Sal. Thou hast recalled to my remembrance what,
If seconded by this our plighted friend,
May claim a serious and attentive hearing.
Mor. Small is the service I can boast, my lord;
In all my best I shall be prompt to aid you.
Lord Sal. Hear, then. Deep underneath this vaulted ground,
Curious and close, by our forefathers scooped,
I do remember me there is a dark
And secret mine, which leads, by many a maze,
Without the castle. Not far thence there stands,
Within the bosom of an aged grove,
An house, for pious uses set apart,
The hallowed seat of godly brethren: there,
I fear not, we shall rest secure of ill.
Lady Sal. Most opportune, as could our wishes frame—
But oh! our little hope! our younger care!
Mor. My life shall answer for lord William's safety.
Lady Sal. Then let us forth.
Mor. The night is over young;
The castle's yet awake, and would but mock
The attempt.
Lord Sal. Say, what shall be the appointed hour?
Mor. Some three hours hence, my lord; or ere the clock
Perchance have told the second watch—and now,
That squint suspicion mar not, let us part.
Lady Sal. Then must we part?—But 'tis to save us all.
Three hours—farewell!—Oh! they will be three long,
Long hours to me!
Lord Sal. Farewell, my best!—Mean time,
Leroches, we will rest us here apart. Farewell,
Farewell! thou soother sweet of every care!
The God, that loves the unsullied mind, descend,
And be thy guardian till we meet again! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Forest and Cottage.*

Enter ARDOLF *and a Knight.*

Ard. The storm is laid; and from the parting clouds
See where the moon steps forth, pale goddess,
Cheering the dark, dull brow of haggard night.
This is the forest—that the cottager's,
Or I do err, the appointed place of meeting.
Knt. It is: behold the rock, as was described,
The torrent foaming down his rugged side.
Ard. See, the bright harbinger of morning climbs
The steep of heaven: they're in the first repose—
Wake, peasant, wake—How balmy sweet the sleep
Of him, who stretches under rustic roof!
His task of labour o'er, content he lays
Him on his rushy couch; nor elves, nor goblins
(The coinage of swoln surfeit or of guilt)
Approach his peaceful pillow. Wake, I say:
Peasant, awake.

Enter a Peasant from the Cottage.

Pea. Who calls?
What is your business, that at this late hour
You make the forest echo with your cries?
Ard. Peasant, are there not certain travellers
Within your cottage?
Pea. No.
Ard. What! saw you not
Two stranger pilgrims pass this way?
Pea. I did.
Two such arrived ere the lark had risen
From her moss cabin, or the cock
Gave note of morn.
Ard. Say, gentle cottager,
Where may they now be lodged?
Pea. Nay, stranger, that
I know not. They went hence about the time
The bat began her twilight play.
Ard. 'Tis strange
They should depart—Left they no message?
Pea. None.——
They said, they wished to see the neighbouring abbey;
But would to-night partake our homely fare.
[*Returns into the cottage.*
Ard. We now are in the precincts of the castle;
But whether to proceed, or wait, perchance
If they return, I know not.—Hark! some one
Approaches—who is there?

Enter LEROCHES.

Leroches!

Ler. Happily met—where are your friends?
Ard. At hand; and well appointed each—where is my lord?
Ler. In chains: in his own castle basely bound——
Torn from his wife and son—How I escaped—
But haste; time is too precious now for more:
His life hangs upon each eventful moment.
Ard. In chains! his life in danger!—Ho! my friends!
To horse, quick; we will rescue him, or perish.
Ler. Ardolf, pursue the eastern causeway you;
I, with a chosen few, will trace the path,
Which led me from the postern.
Ard. Wisely cautioned:——
Divided thus, we wage an easier war. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Within the Castle.*

Enter GREY *and* MORTON.

Grey. My noble Morton!——well hast thou repaid
The nicer hope which I reposed in thee.
—Their unprovided rest outruns my wishes.
Mor. Fools! not to see through my hypocrisy!
That, in the borrowed guise of honest friendship,
I studied but to lure them to my toils—
Concealed from upper light, it yields a safe
Retreat—through that they purposed their escape.
Grey. Within the secret womb of that same vault,
When all the castle's hushed, their bleeding trunks
We will deposit.
Mor. Yes—we will be bloody.
Grey. Here is the weapon—Be firm, and prosper.
[MOR. *receives a dagger, and goes out.*
——Thou too, unthinking fool, must this hour bleed—
Would it were over—they may chance to wake.—
Thou, Sleep! still child of sable-hooded night,
Befriend us! From the dark Lethean cell
Up-conjure all thy store of drowsy charms:
Lock fast their lids, o'erpower each torpid sense,
That they awake not ere the deed be done—
[*Bell tolls.*
—The second watch; and, like death's curfew, deep
And dismal verberates the solemn knell!

Enter a Knight.

Knt. A stranger, sir, who calls him Oswald, waits
Without the castle, and would speak with you.
Grey. Oswald!—He is our friend.
Knt. I have not learned

His errand; but, as it would seem, he comes
With news that much import thy present hearing.
Grey. I'll speak with him anon.
Knt. I know not what
Their purpose; but even now, as on the tower
I stood, which high o'erlooks the eastern causeway,
Methought I heard the distant sound of horses,
As hither bent in full career.
Grey. The sound
Of horse!—Look out; call up our knights—away. [*Exit Knt.*
—What can delay him?—Should my present hopes
Miscarry, I will bear the lady hence,
And make her hostage for my safety; nay,
Perchance, what I have some incentives to,
Supplant them both, the lover and the husband—
He comes!—

Re-enter MORTON.

Mor. Oh! that the earth would yawn and cover me!
Or that Heaven's quick-devouring fires had shrunk
And withered up this arm when it was raised—
Eyes! eyes! why closed ye not ere you beheld
The ghastly ruin?
Grey. Speak. direct——are they disposed?
Mor. Away!—thou hast destroyed my peace for ever—
Had you beheld him as he lay, struggling
In the cold gripe of death; cheeks o'erspread
With livid pale; those eyes, that late shot forth
So radiant, now quite sunk; their burning lamps
Extinct; while from the deep-mouthed wound,
As from a copious fountain, issued forth
Life's purple spring.
I would have fled, but horror for a space
Suspended every power.
Grey. 'Tis well—
Hast thou, then, slain lord Salisbury?
At thy own peril be it—Help!—He has slain
The innocent!
They're murdered, foully murdered by a slave. [*Exit.*
Mor. The earth has teemed with prodigies—this sure
Out-monsters all!

Enter RAYMOND *hastily, with his sword drawn.*

Ray. On what purpose art thou here?
Mor. Lord Raymond cannot be a stranger, sure.
Ray. A dagger!—what hast thou done?
Mor. Did not my lord approve the deed?
Ray. What deed?
Mor. How's this!—My lord,
I had your sanction ratified by Grey;
With promise of high recompence the hour
When Salisbury should expire.
Ray. Accursed be he that told thee so; and thou
That gav'st him credit!
Mor. This is strange!
Ray. Approve!
I did not; by the powers of truth I did not—
Remorseless villain!—Where, where shall I hide
Me? whither shall I fly?—O deed of horror!—
Thy blood, detested hireling, shall in part
Compensate.
Mor. Hold—He cannot sure dissemble—
Wish you, my lord, this deed were yet undone?
Ray. What would the monster? Oh! could I recall
His life by killing twenty thousand slaves
Like thee, it were a comfort!
Mor. I believe
That you are innocent: know, then, my lord,
He lives; he sleeps; and sleeps secure of harm.
Ray. Take heed thou dost not trifle!
Mor. I will confess
Me true, and heaven forgive my foul intent!
I undertook to slay this innocent:
Approached him as a friend—I saw his sufferings;
Saw his distracted wife: at length I cursed,
And in my heart abjured the wicked purpose.
Ray. Hadst thou the goodness! Then, perhaps——
Mor. I thought
Haply that you yourself might soon relent.
This instrument of purposed cruelty,
I took; and, with a fair devised tale
Of Salisbury's death, amused the guilty wretch,
That would ensnare your quiet.
Ray. Is this honest?
Mor. Approach, my lord, approach, and let your eye
Be witness of my truth—In doing thus,
I thought I should be deemed lord Raymond's friend.
Ray. Thou wert the best of friends! Retire thou now. [*Exit* MOR.
One way there yet remains to reconcile
This double war, and heal my tortured bosom.
Thou, that so soundly sleep'st, unguarded thus
[*Going to the side of the stage.*
Against whatever ill that may approach thee,
Awake! rouse from the bed of listless sleep,
And see who comes to greet thee.

Enter Lord SALISBURY.

Lord Sal. Do I dream?
Or am I in the regions of the unblest,
Beset with monsters? Though thou art a fiend,
I will attempt thee.
Ray. Rush not on my weapon.
I have sought thee on a cause which honour loves;
And would not have thee mar my soul's fair purpose.
Lord Sal. Inglorious! base! Oh, shame to manhood! Dearly
Shalt thou atone the accumulated wrongs
That I do bleed withal. Nor sea, nor earth,
Though thou shouldst traverse her remotest climes,
Shall shelter thee from my determined fury.
Ray. Think not that I shall fly thee; or that I
Have sought thee now, but on such terms as even
May challenge thy applause. I come a foe,

Indeed, but I do come a generous foe.
Lord Sal. A generous foe! The brave indeed aspire
To generous acts; their every thought looks up,
And honour's dictates are their only function:
But thou! what terms would'st thou propose? what act
Of that essential virtue, that may rase
The ignoble stains wherewith thou art polluted?
Ray. The ignoble and the brave alike have erred;
And he, that re-ascends to virtue's height,
Does often snatch a wreath, which never bloomed
On safer wisdom's brow. First let me loose
Those ignominious bonds, which have, indeed,
My own dishonoured—not the wearer's arm.
[*Takes off his chains.*
Lord Sal. Say to what purpose tends this honest seeming?
Ray. That I have wronged thee, I confess; take this,
[*Gives him a sword, and draws another.*
The only restitution I have left.
I know thou never canst forgive, nor I
Forget: the sword, then, judge between.
Lord Sal. Indeed!
Lives there so much honour, then, within thee?
Spite of the mighty wrongs which thou hast done
Me, I do thank thee.
Ray. Now, Fortune mark her favourite!
[RAY. *is disarmed.*
Then she is partial, and I must submit.
Lord Sal. Take up thy sword again; my fair revenge
Disdains too cheap a conquest.
Ray. 'Tis too much.
Oh generous! generous even to cruelty!
Some way I would repay thee—Oh, that I
[*Takes up his sword.*
Had never seen thy wife! It may not be;
Then let me tear for ever from my breast
The guilty passion: thus I thank thee——thus
[*Wounds himself.*
Atone the mischiefs, that——Oh!——— [*Falls.*
Lord Sal. This, indeed,
Atones for all. Thou much misguided youth!
What tempted thee to stray so wide from honour?
Ray. Ask, ask that villain; he will answer all;
That villain Grey, whose wicked arts seduced me;
Forgive——I die, I die: a dreadful proof
What ills await the wretch, who gives his ear
To vicious counsels. [*Dies.*
Lord Sal. Dreadful proof indeed!
I do forgive thee,—so forgive thee, Heaven!

Re-enter MORTON.

Now, where's my wife? where is my friend Leroches?
Mor. My lord, by my assistance, he has fled.
I saw how vain your purpose to escape;
His single flight was unobserved. Your friends,
In quest of whom he hasted, are arrived:
That trumpet speaks it. [*A trumpet heard.*
Lord Sal. It is, it is sir Ardolf! See, he comes.

Enter ARDOLF *and Knight.*

Ard. My noble friend! safe! crowned with conquest too!
Lord Sal. Saw you Leroches?
Ard. My lord,
He sought the castle by a private path.
I thought he had been here by this.
Lord Sal. 'Tis well.
But where's my wife? my son? my soul is maimed
Of half its joys till I've again embraced them.

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. My lord, my lord! the countess and lord William——
Send, send and save them from destruction!
With horses, that outstrip the winds, the villains
Have borne her from the castle!
Lord Sal. Ravished by villains! Mount your horses, haste!
Ard. Say, which way have they fled?
Ele. West of the castle:
Heaven grant their swiftness mock not your best speed!
Ard. Now, good my lord, if I might speak—
Lord Sal. Speak not
To me; but forth and scour the country!
Ard. Hark!
Methought I heard a voice——
Ele. And I methought.
Perhaps Heaven has been kind! perhaps 'tis she.
Lady Sal. [*Entering.*] Now, hushed be every fear—Where, where's my hero,
That I may once more hold him to my bosom?

Enter Lady SALISBURY *and Lord* WILLIAM, *conducted by* LEROCHES.

Lord Sal. 'Tis she! 'tis she!
My wife is in my arms again! Speak, speak!
Oh, whence this precious, this unlooked event?
Lady Sal. When the fell ruffian,
When Grey, with impious hands, had snatched us hence,
Then came my guardian angel———came your friend,
And rescued us from ruin.
Ler. Happy hour!
I took the path which brought me to their rescue;
The atrocious villain fell beneath this arm.
Lord Sal. My wife!
My son! my friend! My God! my guardian God!
Ele. O joy, that they are here again!
Lord Sal. They're here! they're here! my wife and son are here!
Proclaim it, O ye sons of light! spread wide
Your starry pinions, angels, spread them wide,
And trumpet loud throughout the unmeasured tracts
Of highest Heaven, that virtue is made happy!
Lady Sal. Let the sun cease to shine, the planets cease,

Drop every star from his etherial height,
Ere I forget thee, source of every good!
Lord Sal. Friends, I am much beholden to you all.
My love! the gloom that overspread our morn,
Is now dispersed; our late mishaps,
Recalled, shall be the amusing narrative,
And story of our future evening, oft
Rehearsed. Our son, too, he shall hang upon
The sounds, and lift his little hands in praise
To heaven: taught by his mother's bright example,
That, to be truly good, is to be blessed.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

THIS virgin author's such a blushing rogue—
What! no gay, lively, laughing epilogue?
'Madam,' says he, and looked so wise! 'in Greece'—
(Greece, that's their cant) 'no jesting closed the piece.
Play, epilogue, and all were grave and solemn'—
Then, sir, the town were fools that did not maul 'em.
No—let your heroine, in this laughing age,
Come thus (as Bayes says) souse upon the stage;
Then with a jaunting air—half smile, half grin,
Curtsey quite round the boxes, and begin.
A spark from court—no husband to detect him:
A pretty fellow too, and yet reject him!—
Now, ladies, let me die but it was silly—
You'll not approve such horrid prud'ry—will ye?—
I should have bless'd th' occasion, and receiv'd him:
He should have kneel'd and vow'd, and I—believ'd him.
—Laugh'd, danc'd and sported it till spouse came over,
Then kissed my dear—while Betty hid the lover.
But here again our poet checks my flight:
'Nay, madam, you mistake the matter quite.
My heroine liv'd in ancient, honest times;
Cards were unknown, and gallantries were crimes!'—
Psha! what if females then were seldom rovers?
Husbands—(aye, there's the cause) were warm as lovers.
Their warlike days indeed were spent in killing;
But then at night—no turtles were so billing.
Well—though he gives me no smart things to say,
I wish this begging face may save his play:
The thing may mend, and learn to please you better——
Do then—nay, pray you shew him some good nature.

THE

MYSTERIOUS MOTHER.

BY

WALPOLE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Countess of NARBONNE.
Count EDMUND, *her Son.*
FLORIAN, *his Friend.*
ADELIZA, *an Orphan.*
BENEDICT, MARTIN, } *Friars.*

PETER, *Porter of the Castle.*
MARIA, ELINOR, } *Damsels attending the Countess. Mutes.*
Chorus of Orphans.
Chorus of Friars.

SCENE,—*The Castle of Narbonne, partly on a Platform before the Gate, and partly in a Garden within the Walls.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Platform before the Castle.*

Enter FLORIAN.

Flor. WHAT awful silence! how these antique towers
And vacant courts dull the suspended soul,
Till expectation wears the cast of fear;
And fear, half-ready to become devotion,
Mumbles a kind of mental orison,
It knows not wherefore:——
What a kind of being is circumstance!
I am a soldier, and were yonder battlements
Garnish'd with combatants, and cannon-mounted,
My daring breast would bound with exultation,
And glorious hopes enliven this drear scene.
Now dare not I scarce tread to my own hearing,
Lest Echo borrow Superstition's tongue,
And seem to answer me, like one departed.
I met a peasant, and inquir'd my way:
The carle, not rude of speech, but like the tenant
Of some night-haunted ruin, bore an aspect
Of horror, worn to habitude. He bade
God bless me; and pass'd on.—I urg'd him farther:
Good master, cried he, go not to the castle;
There sorrow ever dwells, and moping misery.
I press'd him yet—None there, said he, are welcome,
But now and then a mass-priest, and the poor,
To whom the pious countess deals her alms,
On covenant, that each revolving night
They beg of heaven the health of her son's soul,
And of her own: But often as returns
The twentieth of September, they are bound
Fast from the midnight watch to pray till morn.
More would he not disclose, or knew not more.
What precious mummery! Her son in exile,

She wastes on monks and beggars his inheritance,
For his soul's health! I never knew a woman
But lov'd our bodies or our souls too well.
Each master-whim maintains its hour of empire,
And obstinately faithful to its dictates,
With equal ardour, equal importunity,
They teaze us to be damn'd, or to be sav'd.
I hate to love or pray too long.

SCENE II.

Enter PETER, *Porter of the Castle, and* FLORIAN.

Por. Methought
I heard a stranger's voice——What lack you, sir?
Flor. Good fellow, who inhabits here?
Por. I do.
Flor. Belike this castle is not thine.
Por. Belike so:
But be it whose it may, this is no haunt
For revellers and gallants——Pass your way.
Flor. Thou churl! Is this your Gallic hospitality?
Thy lady, on my life, would not thus rudely
Chide from her presence a bewildered knight.
Por. Thou know'st my lady then!—Thou know'st her not.
Canst thou in hair-cloths vex those dainty limbs?
Canst thou on reeking pavements and cold marble,
In meditation pass the live-long night?
Canst mortify that flesh, my rosy minion,
And bid thy rebel appetite refrain
From goblets foaming wine, and costly viands?
These are the deeds, my youngster, must draw down
My lady's ever heav'n-directed eye.
Flor. In sooth, good friend, my knighthood is not school'd
In voluntary rigours——I can fast,
March supperless, and make cold earth my pillow,
When my companions know no choicer fare.
But seldom roost in churches, or reject
The ready banquet, or a willing fair-one.
Por. Angels defend us! What a reprobate!
Yon mould'ring porch, for sixteen years and more,
Has not been struck with such unhallowed sounds.
Hence to thy lewd companions!
Flor. Father grey-beard,
I cry you mercy; nor was it my intention
To wound your reverence's saint-like organs.
But come, thou hast known other days—canst tell
Of banquettings and dancings—'twas not always thus.
Por. No, no—time was—my lord, the count of Narbonne,
A prosp'rous gentleman: were he alive,
We should not know these moping melancholies.
Heaven rest his soul! I marvel not my lady
Cherishes his remembrance, for he was
Comely to sight, and wondrous goodly built.
They say his son count Edmund's mainly like him.
'Would these old arms, that serv'd his grandfather,
Could once enfold him! I should part in peace.
Flor. What if I bring tidings of count Edmund?
Por. Mercy befal me!—Now my dream is out.
Last night the raven croak'd, and from the bars
Of our lodge-fire flitted a messenger—
I knew no good would follow——Bring you ill tidings,
Sir gentleman?
Flor. (This is a solemn fool,
Or solemn knave.) [*Aside.*] Shouldst thou indeed rejoice
To see count Edmund? Would thy noble mistress
Spring with a mother's joy to clasp her son?
Por. Oh! no, no, no.—He must not here—alas!
He must not here set foot—But tell me, stranger,
I prithee, say, does my old master's heir
Still breathe this vital air? Is he in France?
Is he within some ten, or twenty leagues,
Or fifty? I am hearty yet, have all my limbs,
And I would make a weary pilgrimage
To kiss his gracious hand, and at his feet
Lay my old bones—for here I ne'er must see him. [*Weeps.*
Flor. Thou good old man, forgive a soldier's mirth.
But, say, why Narbonne's heir from Narbonne's lands
Is banish'd, driven by a ruthless mother?
Por. Ah! sir, 'tis hard indeed—but spare his mother;
Such virtue never dwelt in female form.
Count Edmund—but he was indeed a stripling,
A very lad—it was the trick of youth,
And we have all our sins, or we have had;
Yet still no pardon—Think'st thou not, my lord,
My late kind master, ere he knew my lady,
Wist not what woman was?—I warrant him—
But so—Count Edmund being not sixteen,
A lusty youth, his father's very image—
Oh! how he has play'd me many a trick—good sir,
Does my young master ever name old Peter?
Well! but I prate—you must forgive my age;
I come to th' point——Her name was Beatrice;
A roguish eye—she ne'er would look on me,
Or we had sav'd full many a woeful day.
Mark you me well?
Flor. I do.
Por. This Beatrice—
But hark! my lady comes—retire a while
Beyond these yews—anon I'll tell you more.
Flor. May I not greet her?
Por. For my office, no:
'Twere forfeit of my badge to hold a parley
With one of near thy years.
[FLORIAN *withdraws.*
[*The Countess in Weeds, with a Crucifix in her*

hand, issues from the Castle, accompanied by two Maidens, and passes over the Stage. When she is gone, FLORIAN *returns.*

Por. [*Continues*] 'Tis ever thus.
At break of morn, she hies to yonder abbey,
And prostrate o'er some monumental stone,
Seems more to wait her doom, than ask to shun it.
The day is past in minist'ring to wants
Of health or means; the closing eve beholds
New tears, new pray'rs, or haggard meditation.
But if cold moonshine, deepening every frown
Of these impending towers, invite her steps,
She issues forth.—Beshrew me, but I tremble,
When my own keys discharge the draw-bridge chains,
And rattle through the castle's farmost vaults.
Then have I seen this sad, this sober mourner,
With frantic gesture and disordered step——
But hush—Who moves up yonder avenue?
It is—no—stay—i'faith! but it is he,
My lady's confessor, with friar Martin.
Quick, hie thee hence—should that same meddling monk
Observe our conf'rence, there were fine work toward.

Flor. You will not leave your tale unfinished?

Por. Mass! but I will—a tale will pay no stipend.
These fifty winters have I borne my staff,
And will not lose my porridge for my prating.

Flor. Well! but count Edmund—Wo't not hear of him?

Por. Aye, bless his name! at any leisure hour.
This evening, ere the shutting of the gates,
Loiter about yon grange; I'll come to thee.
So now, begone—Away! [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

BENEDICT *and* MARTIN.

Ben. ———Ay: sift her, sift her—
As if I had not probed her very soul,
And wound me round her heart—I tell thee, brother,
This woman was not cast in human mould.
Ten such would foil a council, would unbuild
Our Roman church—In her devotions real.
Our beads, our hymns, our saints, amuse her not:
Nay, not confession; not repeating o'er
Her darling sins, has any charms for her.
I have mark'd her praying: not one wand'ring thought
Seems to steal meaning from her words—She prays,
Because she feels, and feels, because a sinner.

Mart. What is this secret sin, this untold tale,
That art cannot extract, nor penance cleanse?
Loss of a husband, sixteen years enjoy'd,
And dead as many, could not stamp such sorrow.
Nor could she be his death's artificer,
And now affect to weep it—I have heard,
That chasing, as he homeward rode, a stag,
Chaf'd by the hounds, with sudden onset slew
Th' adventurous count.

Ben. 'Twas so; and yet, my brother,
My mind has more than once imputed blood
To this incessant mourner. Beatrice,
The damsel for whose sake she holds in exile
Her only son, has never, since the night
Of his incontinence, been seen or heard of.

Mart. 'Tis clear, 'tis clear; nor will her prudent tongue
Accuse its owner.

Ben. Judge not rashly, brother.
I oft have shifted my discourse to murder:
She notes it not. Her muscles hold their place
Nor discomposed, nor firm'd to steadiness.
No sudden flushing, and no fault'ring lip:
Nor, though she pities, lifts she to her eyes
Her handkerchief, to palliate her disorder.
There the wound rankles not.——I've fix'd on love,
The failure of the sex, and aptest cause
Of each attendant crime.—

Mart. Aye, brother, there
We master all their craft. Touch but that string—

Ben. Still, brother, do you err. She own'd to me,
That, though of nature warm, the passion love
Did ne'er anticipate her choice. The count,
Her husband, so ador'd and so lamented,
Won not her fancy, till the nuptial rites
Had with the sting of pleasure taught her passion.
This, with such modest truth, and that truth heighten'd
By conscious sense, that holds deceit a weakness,
She utter'd, I would pawn my order's credit
On her veracity.

Mart. Then whither turn
To worm her secret out?

Ben. I know not that.
She will be silent, but she scorns a falsehood,
And thus while frank on all things, but her secret,
I know, I know it not.

Mart. Till she disclose it,
Deny her absolution.

Ben. She will take none:
Offer'd, she scoffs it; and withheld, demands not;
Nay, vows she will not load her sinking soul
With incantations.

Mart. This is heresy,
Rank heresy; and holy church should note it.

Ben. Be patient, brother—Though of adamant
Her reason, charity dissolves that rock,
—And surely we have tasted of the stream.
Nay, one unguarded moment may disclose
This mystic tale—then, brother, what a harvest,
When masters of her bosom-guilt!—Age too
May numb her faculties.—Or soon, or late,
A praying woman must become our spoil.

Mart. Her zeal may faulter.

Ben. Not in solitude.
I nurse her in new horrors; form her tenants
To fancy visions, phantoms; and report them.

She mocks their fond credulity—but, trust me,
Her memory retains their colouring.
Oft times it paints her dreams; and ebon night
Is no logician. I have known her call
For lights, ere she could combat its impressions.
I too, though often scorn'd, relate my dreams,
And wond'rous voices heard; that she may think me
At least an honest bigot; nor remember
I tried to practise on her fears, and, foil'd,
Give o'er my purpose.

Mart. This is masterly.

Ben. Poor mastery! when I am more in awe
Of my own penitent than she of me.
My genius is command; art, but a tool,
My grovelling fortune forces me to use.
Oh! were I seated high as my ambition,
I'd place this naked foot on necks of monarchs,
And make them bow to creeds myself would laugh at.

Mart. By humbler arts our mighty fabric rose.
Win power by craft; wear it with ostentation;
For confidence is half security.
Deluded men think boldness conscious strength;
And grow the slaves of their own want of doubt.
Gain to the Holy See this fair domain;
A crimson bonnet may reward your toils,
And the rich harvest prove at last your own.

Ben. Never, while Edmund lives. This steady woman
Can ne'er be pious with so many virtues.
Justice is interwoven in her frame;
Nor will she wrong the son she will not see.
She loves him not; yet mistress of his fortunes,
His ample exhibition speaks her bounty.
She destines him whate'er his father's love
Gave blindly to her will. Her alms, her charities,
Usurp'd from her own wants, she sets apart
A scanty portion only for her ward,
Young Adeliza.

Mart. Say her son were dead,
And Adeliza veil'd—

Ben. I press the latter
With fruitless ardour. Often as I urge it,
She pleads the maiden's flushing cheek, and nature,
That speaks in characters of glowing rose
Its modest appetites and timid wishes.
Her sex, she says, when gratified, are frail;
When check'd, a hurricane of boundless passions;
Then, with sweet irony and sad, she wills me
Ask my own breast, if cowls and scapularies
Are charms all powerful to subdue desire?

Mart. 'Twere wiser school the maiden: lead the train
Of young ideas to a fancied object.
A mental spouse may fill her hov'ring thoughts,
And bar their fixing on some earthly lover.

Ben. This is already done—but Edmund's death
Were hopes more solid—

Mart. First report him dead;
His letters intercepted—

Ben. Greatly thought!
Thou true son of the church!—and lo! where comes
Our patroness—leave me; I will not lose
An instant. I will sound her inmost soul,
And mould it to the moment of projection.

[*Exit* MARTIN. BENEDICT *retires within the castle.*

SCENE IV.

Countess, two Maidens.

Coun. Haste thee, Maria, to the western tower,
And learn if the aged pilgrim dozes yet.
You, Elinor, attend my little orphans,
And, when their task is done, prepare their breakfast.
But scant the allowance of the red-hair'd urchin,
That maim'd the poor man's cur.—Ah! happy me! [*The damsels go in.*
If sentiment, untutor'd by affliction,
Had taught my temperate blood to feel for others,
Ere pity, perching on my mangled bosom,
Like flies on wounded flesh, had made me shrink,
More with compunction than with sympathy!
Alas! must guilt then ground our very virtues!
Grow they on sin alone, and not on grace?
While Narbonne liv'd, my fully-sated soul
Thought none unhappy—for it did not think!
In pleasures roll'd whole summer-suns away;
And if a pensive visage cross'd my path,
I deem'd the wearer envious or ill-natur'd.
What anguish had I blessedly redressed,
But that I was too bless'd!—Well! peace is fled,
Ne'er to return! nor dare I snap the thread
Of life, while misery may want a friend.
Despair and hell must wait, while pity needs
My ministry—Eternity has scope
Enough to punish me, though I should borrow
A few short hours to sacrifice to charity.

SCENE V.

BENEDICT, *Countess.*

Ben. I sought you, lady.

Coun. Happily I'm found.
Who needs the widow's mite?

Ben. None ask your aid.
Your gracious foresight still prevents occasion:
And your poor beadsman joys to meet your presence,
Uncumber'd with a suit. It pains my soul,
Oft as I tax your bounty, lest I seem
A craving or immodest almoner.

Coun. No more of this, good father. I suspect not
One of your holy order of dissembling:
Suspect not me of loving flattery.
Pass a few years, and I shall be a corse—
Will flattery then new cloath my skeleton,
Fill out these hollow jaws? Will't give me virtues?
Or at the solemn audit pass for truth,
And varnish o'er my stains?

Ben. The church could seal

Your pardon—but you scorn it. In your pride
Consists your danger. Yours are Pagan virtues:
As such I praise them—but as such condemn them.
Coun. Father, my crimes are Pagan; my belief
Too orthodox to trust to erring man.
What! shall I, foul with guilt, and self-condemn'd,
Presume to kneel, where angels kneel appall'd,
And plead a priest's certificate for pardon?
While he, perchance, before my blasted eyes
Shall sink to woes, endless, unutterable,
For having fool'd me into that presumption?
Ben. Is he to blame, trusting to what he grants?
Coun. Am I to blame, not trusting what he grants?
Ben. Yet faith—
Coun. I have it not—Why shakes my soul
With nightly terrors? Courage such as mine
Would start at nought but guilt. 'Tis from within
I tremble. Death would be felicity,
Were there no retrospect. What joys have I?
What pleasure softens, or what friendship sooths
My aching bosom?—I have lost my husband:
My own decree has banish'd my own son.
Ben. Last night I dreamt your son was with the blessed.
Coun. Would heaven he were!
Ben. Do you then wish his death?
Coun. Should I not wish him blest?
Ben. Belike he is:
I never knew my Friday's dreams erroneous.
Coun. Nor I knew superstition in the right.
Ben. Madam, I must no longer hear this language;
You do abuse my patience. I have borne,
For your soul's health, and hoping your conversion,
Opinions most deprav'd. It ill beseems
My holy function to give countenance,
By lending ear, to such pernicious tenets.
The judgments hanging o'er your destin'd head
May reach even me—I see it! I am wrapt
Beyond my bearing! my prophetic soul
Views the red falchion of eternal justice
Cut off your sentenc'd race—your son is dead!
Coun. Father, we no prophetic dæmon bear
Within our breast, but conscience. That has spoken
Words more tremendous than this acted zeal,
This poetry of fond enthusiasm
Can conjure up. It is the still small voice
That breathes conviction. 'Tis that voice has told me,
'Twas my son's birth, not his mortality, *
Must drown my soul in woe.—Those tears are shed.
Ben. Unjust, uncharitable as your words,
I pardon them. Illy of me you deem;
I know it, lady. 'Tis humiliation:
As such I bow to it—yet dear I tender
Your peace of mind. Dismiss your worthless servant:
His prayers shall still be yours.
Coun. Forgive me, father:
Discretion does not guide my words. I meant
No insult on your holy character.
Ben. No, lady; chuse some other monitor,
Whose virtues may command your estimation.
Your useless beadsman shall behold with joy
A worthier man mediate your peace with heav'n.
Coun. Alas! till reconcil'd with my own breast,
What peace is there for me!
Ben. In the neighb'ring district
There lives a holy man, whose sanctity
Is mark'd with wondrous gifts. Grace smiles upon him;
Conversion tracks his footsteps: miracles
Spring from his touch; his sacred casuistry
Pours balm into despair. Consult with him.
Unfold the impenetrable mystery,
That sets your soul and you at endless discord.
Coun. Consult a holy man! inquire of him!
—Good father, wherefore? What should I inquire? †
Must I be taught of him, that guilt is woe?
That innocence alone is happiness?
That martyrdom itself shall leave the villain
The villain that it found him? Must I learn
That minutes stamp'd with crimes are past recall?
That joys are momentary, and remorse
Eternal? Shall he teach me charms and spells,
To make my sense believe against my sense?
Shall I think practices and penances
Will, if he say so, give the health of virtue
To gnawing self-reproach?—I know they cannot.
Nor could one risen from the dead proclaim
This truth in deeper sounds to my conviction.
We want no preacher to distinguish vice
From virtue. At our birth the God reveal'd
All conscience needs to know. No codicil
To duty's rubric here and there was plac'd
In some saint's casual custody. Weak minds
Want their soul's fortune told by oracles
And holy jugglers. Me, nor oracles,
Nor prophets, death alone can certify,
Whether, when justice's full dues exacted,
Mercy shall grant one drop to slake my torment.
—Here, father, break we off; you to your calling;
I to my tears and mournful occupation. [*Exeunt.*

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* On the death of the Comte de Vermandois, his mother, the Duchess de la Valiere, said, must I weep for his death, before I have done weeping for his birth?

† Imitated from Cato's speech in Lucan, beginning *Quid quæri, Labiene, jubes?*

ACT II.

SCENE—*Continues.*

Count EDMUND, FLORIAN.

Edm. Doubt not, my friend; Time's pencil, hardships, war,
Some taste of pleasure too, have chas'd the bloom
Of ruddy comeliness, and stamp'd this face
With harsher lineaments, that well may mock
The prying of a mother's eye.—A mother,
Through whose firm nerves tumultuous instinct's flood
Ne'er gush'd with eager eloquence, to tell her,
This is your son! your heart's own voice proclaims him.

Flor. If not her love, my lord, suspect her hatred.
Those jarring passions spring from the same source;
Hate is distempered love.

Edm. Why should she hate me?
For that my opening passion's swelling ardour
Prompted congenial necessary joy,
Was that a cause?—Nor was she then so rigid.
No sanctified dissembler had possess'd
Her scar'd imagination, teaching her
That holiness begins where nature ends.
No, Florian; she herself was woman then,
A sensual woman. Nor satiety,
Sickness and age, and virtue's frowardness,
Had so obliterated pleasure's relish—
She might have pardon'd what she felt so well.

Flor. Forgive me, Edmund; nay, nor think I preach,
If I, God wot, of morals loose enough,
Seem to condemn you. You have often told me,
The night, the very night that to your arms
Gave pretty Beatrice's melting beauties,
Was the same night on which your father died.

Edm. 'Tis true—and thou, sage monitor, dost thou
Hold love a crime so irremissible?
Woudst thou have turn'd thee from a willing girl
To sing a requiem to thy father's soul?
I thought my mother busied with her tears,
Her faintings, and her masses, while I stole
To Beatrice's chamber.—How my mother
Became apprized, I know not: but her heart,
Never too partial to me, grew estranged.
Estrang'd!—aversion in its fellest mood
Scowl'd from her eye, and drove me from her sight.
She call'd me impious: nam'd my honest lewdness
A profanation of my father's ashes.
I knelt and wept, and, like a puling boy,
For now my blood was cool, believed, confess'd
My father's hov'ring spirit incens'd against me.
This weak confession but inflam'd her wrath;
And when I would have bath'd her hand with tears,
She snatch'd it back with horror.

Flor. 'Twas the trick
Of over-acted sorrow. Grief fatigues;
And each collateral circumstance is seiz'd
To cheat th' uneasy feeling. Sable chambers,
The winking lamp, and pomp of midnight woe,
Are but a specious theatre, on which
Th' inconstant mind with decency forgets
Its inward tribute. Who can doubt the love
Which to a father's shade devotes the son?
[*Ironically.*

Edw. Still must I doubt; still deem some mystery,
Beyond a widow's pious artifice,
Lies hid beneath aversion so relentless.
All my inheritance, my lordships, castles,
My father's lavish love bequeath'd my mother.
Chose she some second partner of her bed,
Or did she waste her wealth on begging saints,
And rogues that act contrition, it were proof
Of her hypocrisy, or lust of fame
In monkish annals. But to me her hand
Is bounteous, as her heart is cold. I tell thee,
Bating enjoyment of my native soil,
Narbonne's revenues are as fully mine,
As if I held them by the strength of charters.

Flor. Why set them on the hazard then, when she
Who deals them may revoke? Your absence hence
The sole condition.

Edm I am weary, Florian,
Of such a vagrant life. Befits it me,
Sprung from a race of heroes, Narbonne's prince,
To lend my casual arm's approved valour
To quarrels, nor my country's nor my own?
To stain my sword with random blood!—I fought
At Buda 'gainst the Turk—a holy war,
So was it deem'd—I smote the turban'd race:
Did zeal or did ambition nerve my blow?
Or matter'd it to me, on Buda's domes
Whether the crescent or the cross prevail'd?
Mean time on alien climes I dissipated
Wealth from my subjects wrung, the peasant's tribute,
Earn'd by his toil. Mean time in ruin laid
My mould'ring castles—Yes, ye moss-grown walls!
Ye tow'rs defenceless! I revisit ye
Shame-stricken—Where are all your trophies now?
Your throng'd courts, revelry, the tumult,
That spoke the grandeur of my house, the homage
Of neighbouring barons? Thus did Thibalt, Raoul,

Or Clodomir, my brave progenitors,
Creep like a spy, and watch to thrid your gates
Unnoticed? No; with martial attributes,
With waving banners and enlivening fifes,
They bade your portal wide unfold its jaws,
And welcome them and triumph.
Flor. True, my lord:
They reign'd the monarchs of a score of miles;
Imperial lords of ev'ry trembling cottage
Within their cannon's mandate. Deadly feuds
For obsolete offences, now array'd
Their liveried banditti, prompt to deal
On open vallies and unguarded herds,
On helpless virgins and unweapon'd boors,
The vengeance of their tribe. Sometimes they dar'd
To scowl defiance to the distant throne,
Imprison'd, canton'd inaccessibly
In their own rock-built dungeons—Are these glories
My Edmund's soul's ambition to revive?
Thus would he bless his vassals!
Edm. Thy reproof,
My friend, is just. But had I not a cause,
A tender cause, that prompted my return?
This cruel parent, whom I blame, and mourn,
Whose harshness I resent, whose woes I pity,
Has won my love, by winning my respect.
Her letters! Florian; such unstudied strains
Of virtuous eloquence! She bids me, yes,
This praying Magdalene enjoins my courage
To emulate my great forefathers' deeds:
Tells me, that shame and guilt alone are mortal;
That death but bars the possibility
Of frailty, and embalms untainted honour.
Then blots and tears efface some half-told woe
Lab'ring in her full bosom. I decypher'd
In one her blessing granted, and eras'd.
And yet what follow'd mark'd anxiety
For my soul's welfare. I must know this riddle.
I must, will comfort her. She cannot surely,
After such perils, wounds by her command
Encounter'd, after sixteen exil'd years,
Spurn me, when kneeling—Think'st thou 'tis possible?
Flor. I would not think it; but a host of priests
Surround her. They, good men, are seldom found
To plead the cause of pity. Self-denial,
Whose dissonance from nature's kindest laws
By contradicting wins on our perverseness,
Is rank fanaticism's belov'd machine.
Oh! 'twill be heroism, a sacrifice,
To curb the torrent of maternal fondness!
You shall be beggar'd, that the saint your mother
May, by cowl'd sycophants and canting jugglers,
Be hail'd, be canoniz'd a new Teresa.
Pray be not seen here: let's again to the wars.
Edm. No, Florian; my dull'd soul is sick of riot,
Sick of the thoughtless jollity of camps,
Where revelry subsists on desolation,
And shouts of joy contend with dying groans.
Our sports are fleeting; snatch'd, perhaps not granted.
'Tis time to bid adieu to vagrant pleasure,
And fix the wanderer love. Domestic bliss—
Flor. Yes, your fair pensioner, young Adeliza,
Has sober'd your inconstancy. Her smiles
Were exquisite—to rule a family! [*Ironically.*
So matron-like an air—She must be fruitful.
Edm. Pass we this levity—'Tis true, the maiden
Is beauty's type renew'd. Like blooming Eve
In nature's young simplicity, and blushing
With wonder at creation's opening glow,
She charms, unknowing what it is to charm.
Flor. This is a lover's language—Is she kind?
Edm. Cold as the metal bars that part her from me;
She listens, but replies not to my purpose.
Flor. How gain'd you then admittance?
Edm. This whole month,
While waiting your arrival, I have haunted
Her convent's parlour. 'Tis my mother's wish
To match her nobly. Hence her guardian abbess
Admits such visitors as claim her notice
By worthy bearing and convenient splendour.
O Florian, union with that favour'd maiden
Might reconcile my mother—Hark! What sound—
[*A chapel bell rings.*
Flor. A summons to some office of devotion.
My lord, weigh well what you project—
[*Singing within.*
Edm. I hear
Voices that seem approaching—hush! they sing.
Listen!
Flor. No; let us hence: you will be known.
Edm. They cannot know me—see!

SCENE II.

FLORIAN, EDMUND, MARTIN, *Orphans.*

[*A procession of children of both sexes, neatly clothed in a white and blue uniform, issue from the castle, followed by friar* MARTIN, *and advance towards the stage door. They stop, and the children repeat the following hymn, part of which they should have sung within the castle.*]

Throne of justice! lo! we bend,
Thither dare our hopes ascend,
Where seraphs, wrapt in light'ning rays,
Dissolve in mercy's tender blaze.

Hear us! harmless orphans hear!
For her who dries our falling tear.
Hush her sorrows: calm her breast:
Give her, what she gives us, rest.

Guard our spotless souls from sin!
Grant us virtue's palm to win!
Cloath the penitent with grace;
And guilt's foul spots efface! efface!

Edm. I'll speak to them.
Sweet children—or thou sanctified conductor,

Give me to know what solemn pilgrimage,
What expiation of offences past,
Thus sadly ye perform? In whose behalf
To win a blessing, raise these little suppliants
Their artless hands to heaven? Pray pardon too
A soldier's curiosity.
Mart. The dew
Of grace and peace attend your steps. You seem
A stranger, or you could but know, sir knight,
That Narbonne's pious Countess dwells within;
A lady most disconsolate. Her lord,
Her best beloved, by untimely fate
Was snatch'd away in lusty life's full 'vantage—
But no account made up! no absolution!
Hence scant the distance of a mile he fell.
His weeping relict o'er his spot of doom
A goodly cross erected. Thither we,
At each year's end, in sad and solemn guise,
Proceed to chaunt our holy dirge, and offer
Due intercession for his soul's repose.
Edm. 'Tis fitly done. And dar'd a voice profane
Join in the chorus of your holy office,
Myself would kneel for Narbonne's peace.
Mart. Young sir,
It glads my soul to hear such pious breathings
From one, whose occupation rarely scans
The distance 'twixt enjoyment and the tomb.
Say, didst thou know the Count?
Edm. I knew his son.
Mart. Count Edmund? where sojourns he?
Edm. In the grave.
Mart. Is Edmund dead? Say how.
Edm. He fell at Buda:
And not to his dishonour.
Mart. (Welcome sounds! [*Aside.*
I must know more of this)—Proceed, my children;
Short of the cross I'll overtake your steps.
Orphan Girl. Oh! father, but I dare not pass without you
By the church-porch. They say the Count sits there,
With clotted locks, and eyes like burning stars.
Indeed I dare not go.
Other Children. Nor I. Nor I.
Mart. My loves, he will not harm such innocents.
But wait me at the bridge: I'll strait be with ye.
[*Children go out reluctantly.*
Flor. I marvel, father, gravity like your's
Should yield assent to tales of such complexion:
Permitting them in baby fantasy
To strike their dangerous root.
Mart. I marvel not
That levity like yours, unhallow'd boy,
Should spend its idle shaft on serious things.
Your comrade's bearing warrants no such licence.
Flor. Think'st thou, because my friend, with humble fervour,
Kneels to Omnipotence, each gossip's dream,
Each village-fable domineers in turn
His brain's distemper'd nerves? Think'st thou a soldier
Must by his calling be an impious braggart?
Or, being not, a superstitious slave?
True valour, owning no pre-eminence
In equals, dares not wag presumption's tongue
Against high heav'n.
Mart. In us respect heav'n's servants.
Flor. Monks may reach heav'n, but never came from thence.
[*Violent storm of thunder and lightning.*
Mart. Will this convince thee? Where's the gossip's dream,
The village-fable now? Hear heav'n's own voice
Condemn impiety!
Flor. Hear heav'n's own voice
Condemn imposture!
Edm. Here end your dispute.
The storm comes on.
Mart. Yes, you do well to check
Your comrade's profanation: let swift justice
O'ertake his guilt, and stamp his doom in thunder.
Flor. Father, art thou so read in languages
Thou canst interpret th' inarticulate
And quarrelling elements? What says the storm?
Pronounces it for thee or me? Do none
Dispute within the compass of its bolt
But we? Is the same loud-voic'd oracle
Definitive for fifty various brawls?
Or but a shock of clouds to all but us?
What if two drunkards at this instant hour
Contend for preference of taste; one ranking
The vines of Burgundy before the juice
That dances in a foam of brilliant bubbles
From Champagne's berries; think'st thou thunder speaks
In favour of the white or ruby grape?
Mart. What mockery! I resign thee to thy fate— [*Going.*
[*The orphan children run in terrified.*
1 *Orph.* O father, save us! save us, holy father!
Mart. What means this panic?
1 *Orph.* Oh! a storm so dreadful!
Some dæmon rides in th' air.
Mart. Undoubtedly.
Could you distinguish aught?
1 *Orph.* I fell to earth,
And said the pray'r you taught me against spectres.
Mart. 'Twas well—but none of you, had none the courage
To face the fiend?
2 *Orph.* I wink'd, and saw the lightning
Burst on the monument. The shield of arms
Shiver'd to splinters. Ere I could repeat
An Ave-Mary, down with hideous crash
The cross came tumbling—then I fled—
Mart. Retire;
This is unholy ground. Acquaint the countess.
I will not tarry long.—[*Exeunt children.*] Thou mouth accurst, [*To* FLORIAN.
Repent, and tremble! Wherefore hast thou drawn
On Narbonne's plains, already visited
By long calamity, new storms of horror?
The seasons change their course; th' afflicted hind
Bewails his blasted harvest. Meteors ride
The troubled sky, and chase the darken'd sun.

Heav'n vindicates its altars: tongues licentious
Have scoff'd our holy rites, and hidden sins
Have forc'd th' offended elements to borrow
Tremendous organs! Sixteen fatal years
Has Narbonne's province groan'd beneath the hand
Of desolation—for what crimes we know not!
To edge suspended vengeance art thou come?

EDMUND, *preventing* FLORIAN.

My friend, reply not—Father, I lament
This casual jarring—let us crave your pardon.
I feel your country's woes: I lov'd Count Edmund:
Revere his father's ashes. I will visit
The ruin'd monument—and at your leisure
Could wish some conf'rence with you.
Mart. (This is well: [*Aside.*
I almost had forgotten)—Be it so.
Where is your haunt?
Edm. A mile without the town,
Hard by St Bridget's nunnery.
Mart. There expect me.
[*Aside.*] (I must to Benedict)—Heav'n's peace be with you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Countess, Porter.

Por. Return, my gracious lady. Though the storm
Abates his clamours, yonder angry clouds
Are big with spouting fires—do not go forth.
Coun. Wretches like me, good Peter, dread no storms;
'Tis delicate felicity that shrinks,
When rocking winds are loud, and wraps itself
Insultingly in comfortable furs,
Thinking how many naked objects want
Like shelter and security. Do thou
Return; I'll seek the monument alone.
Por. No, my good lady: never be it said
That faithful Peter his dear mistress left
Expos'd to tempests. These thin-sprinkled hairs
Cannot hold long. If in your service shed,
'Twere a just debt—hark! sure I heard a groan!
Pray, let us in again.—
Coun. My honest servant,
Thy fear o'erpow'rs thy love. I heard no groan;
Nor could it 'scape a sense so quick as mine
At catching misery's expressive note:
'Tis my soul's proper language—Injur'd shade!
Shade of my Narbonne! if thy scornful spirit
Rode in yon whirlwind, and impell'd its bolt
Implacable! indignant! 'gainst the cross
Rais'd by thy wretched wife—behold she comes
A voluntary victim! Re-assemble
Thy lightnings, and accept her destin'd head.
Por. For pity! gracious dame, what words are these!
In any mouth less holy they would seem
A magic incantation. Goblins rise
At sounds less pow'rful. Last year's 'clipse fell out,
Because your maidens cross'd a gypsy's palm
To know what was become of Beatrice.
Coun. And didst thou dare inform them where she dwells?
Por. No, on my duty—true, they think I know;
And so thinks Benedict, your confessor.
He says, she could not pass the castle gates
Without my privity—Well! I had a task
To say him nay. The honour of my keys,
My office was at stake. No, father, said I,
None pass the draw-bridge without Peter's knowledge.
How then to beat him from his point?—I had it—
Who knows, quoth I, but sudden malady
Took off the damsel? She might, or might not,
Have sepulture within the castle-walls—
Coun. Peace, fool—and thus thy shrewd equivocation
Has stain'd my name with murder's foul suspicion!
—O peace of virtue! thy true votaries
Quail not with ev'ry blast! I cloak my guilt!
Things foreign rise and load me with their blackness.
Erroneous imputation must be borne;
Lest, while unravelling the knotty web,
I lend a clue may vibrate to my heart.
—But who comes here? retire we, and observe.
[*They withdraw.*

SCENE IV.

FLORIAN, *Countess, Porter.*

Flor. 'Tis not far off the time the porter will'd me
Expect him here. My friend, indulging grief,
Chose no companion of his pensive walk.
Yes, I must serve thee. May my prosp'rous care
Restore thee to thy state, and aid thy love,
To make the blooming Adeliza thine!

Countess, apart to the Porter.

Methought he spoke of love and Adeliza.
Who may it be?
Por. I never heard his name.

Countess, approaching.

Stranger, did chance or purpose guide thy steps
To this lone dwelling?
[*Porter makes signs to* FLORIAN *not to discover their former interview.*
Flor. Pardon, gentle lady,
If curious to behold the pious matron
Whom Narbonne's plains obey, I sought this castle,
And deem my wish indulg'd in viewing thee.
Coun. Me! stranger. Is affliction then so rare,
It occupies the babbler Fame?—Oh, no.
My sorrows are not new. Austerities
And rigid penance tempt no curious eyes;
Nor speaks your air desire of searching out
The house of mourning. Rather should you seek
Some unsunn'd beauty, some unpractis'd fair one,
Who thinks the first soft sounds she hears are love.
There may be such at Narbonne: none dwell here,

But melancholy, sorrow, and contrition.
Flor. Pleasure has charms; but so has Virtue too.
One skims the surface, like the swallow's wing,
And scuds away unnotic'd. T'other nymph,
Like spotless swans in solemn majesty,
Breasts the full surge, and leaves long light behind.
Coun. Your courtly phrase, young knight, bespeaks a birth
Above the vulgar. May I ask, how old
Your residence in Narbonne? Whence your race?
Flor. In Brabant was I born: my father's name
The baron of St Orme. I wait at Narbonne
My letters of exchange, while passing homewards
To gather my late sire's no mean succession.
Coun. Dead is your father! and unwet your cheek!
Trust me, young sir, a father's guardian arm
Were well worth all the treasures it withheld.
A mother might be spar'd—
Flor. Mothers, like thee,
Were blessings.
Coun. Curses!
Por. Lady, 'tis the hour
Of pray'r. Shall I ring out the chapel bell?
Coun. Stranger, I'm summon'd hence. Within these walls
I may not speak with thee: my solemn purpose
Admits no converse with unsteady youth.
But at St Bridget's nunnery, to-morrow,
If you can spare some moments from your pastime,
In presence of the abbess, I would talk with thee.
Flor. Madam, I shall not fail.
Coun. Good angels guard thee!
[*Exeunt Countess and Porter.*

SCENE V.

Flor. [*Alone.*] So, this is well, my introduction made,
It follows that I move her for her son.
She seems of gentler mould than fame bespoke her,
Nor wears her eye the saucy superiority
Of bigot pride. Who knows but she may wish
To shake the trammels of enthusiasm off,
And reconcile herself to easier paths
Of simple goodness? Women oft wear the mask
Of piety to draw respect, or hide
The loss of it. When age dispels the train
That waits on beauty, then religion blows
Her trumpet, and invites another circle;
Who, full as false as the preceding crew,
Flatter her problematic mental charms;
While, snuffing incense, and devoutly wanton,
The Pagan goddess grows a christian saint,
And keeps her patent of divinity.
Well! Edmund, whatsoe'er thy mother be,
I'll put her virtue or hypocrisy
To the severest test.—Countess, expect me!
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A small Garden within the Castle, terminated by a long Cloister, beyond which appear some Towers.

Coun. [*Alone.*] The monument destroyed—Well! what of that?
Were ev'ry thunderbolt address'd to me,
Not one would miss me. Fate's unerring hand
Darts not at random. Nor, as fractious children
Are chid by proxy, does it deal its wrath
On stocks and stones to frighten, not chastise us.
Omens and prodigies are but begotten
By guilt on pride. We know the doom we merit;
And self-importance makes us think all nature
Busied to warn us when that doom approaches.
ie! fie! I blush to recollect my weakness.
My Edmund may be dead; the house of Narbonne
May perish from this earth; poor Adeliza
May taste the cup of woe that I have drugg'd:
But light'nings play not to announce our fate;
No whirlwinds rise to prophesy to mites;
Nor, like inquisitors, does heav'n dress up
In flames the victims it intends to punish,
Making a holiday for greater sinners.
—Greater! oh! impious! Were the faggots plac'd
Around me, and the fatal torch applied,
What wretch could view the dreadful apparatus,
And be a blacker criminal than I am?
Perhaps my virtues but enhance my guilt.
Penance attracts respect, and not reproach.
How dare I be esteem'd? Be known my crimes!
Let shame anticipate the woes to come!
—Ha! monster! would'st disclose the frightful scene?
Would'st teach the vicious world unheard-of sins,
And be a new apostle of perdition?
—My Edmund too! has not a mother's hand
Afflicted him enough? shall this curs'd tongue
Brand him with shame indelible, and sting
His honest bosom with his mother's scorpions?
Shall Adeliza hear the last of horrors,
Ere her pure breast, that sighs for sins it knows not,
Has learn'd the rudiments of human frailty?
No, hapless maid—

Enter a Servant.

Ser. Madam, young Adeliza
Entreats to speak with you. The lady abbess

Sickens to death.
Coun. Admit her.—Now, my soul,
[*Exit Servant.*
Recal thy calm: support alone thy torments;
And envy not the peace thou ne'er must know.

SCENE II.

Countess, ADELIZA.

Coun. Approach, sweet maid; thy melancholy mien
Speaks thy compassionate and feeling heart.
'Tis a grave lesson for thy blooming years,
A scene of dissolution! But when Death
Expands his pinions o'er a bed so holy,
Sure he's a welcome guest.
Ade. Oh! do not doubt it;
The pious matron meets him like a friend
Expected long. And if a tender tear,
At leaving your poor ward, melts in her eye,
And downward sinks its fervent ecstacy,
Still does impatience to be gone betray
Her inward satisfaction. Yesternight,
As weeping, praying, by her couch I knelt,
Behold, my Adeliza, mark, she said,
How happy the death-bed of innocence!*
Oh! lady, how those sounds affected me!
I wish'd to die with her—and oh! forgive me,
If in that moment I forgot my patroness!
Coun. It was a wish devout. Can that want pardon?
But to confess it, speaks thy native candour.
Thy virtuous, thy ingenuous truth disdains
To hide a thought—
Ade. [*Falling at her feet.*] Oh! can I hear this praise,
And not expire in blushes at thy feet?
Coun. What means this passion?
Ade. Ah! recall thy words:
Thy Adeliza merits no encomium.
Coun. Thou art too modest. Praise is due to truth.
Thou shouldst not seek it; nor should I withhold it.
Ade. For pity, spare me—No, my honour'd mistress,
I merit not—oh, no, my guilty heart
Deserves thy frowns——I cannot speak—
Coun. Be calm:
Thou know'st no guilt. Unfold thy lab'ring breast;
Say, am not I thy friend? Me canst thou fear?
Ade. Can I fear aught beside? Fear aught but goodness?
Has not thy lavish bounty cloath'd me, fed me?
Hast thou not taught me virtue? Whom, on earth,
But such a benefactress, such a friend,
Can Adeliza fear? Alas! she knows
No other friend! and christian fortitude
Dreads not a foe. Methinks I would have said
That christian innocence—but shame restrain'd
My conscious tongue—I am not innocent.
Coun. Thou dearest orphan, to my bosom come,
And vent thy little sorrows. Purity
Like thine affrights itself with fancied guilt.
I'll be thy confessor; and trust me, love,
Thy penance will be light.
Ade. In vain you chear me.
Say, what is guilt, but to have known a thought
I blush'd to tell thee? To have lent mine ear,
For three long weeks, to sounds I did not wish
My patroness should hear! Ah! when till now
Have I not hop'd thy presence, thought it long,
If two whole days detain'd thee from our mass?
When have I wept, but when thou hast refus'd
To let thy Adeliza call thee mother?
I know I was not worthy of such honour,
Too splendid for a child of charity.
I now am most unworthy! I, undone,
Have not desir'd thy presence; have not thought it
Long, if two days thou hast declin'd our mass.
Other discourse than thine has charm'd mine ear;
Nor dare I now presume to call thee mother!
Coun. My lovely innocence, restrain thy tears.
I know thy secret; know, why beats and throbs
Thy little heart with unaccustom'd tumult.
Ade. Impossible—Oh! let me tell thee all—
Coun. No; I will tell it thee. Thou hast convers'd
With a young knight—
Ade. Amazement! Who inform'd thee?
Pent in her chamber, sickness has detain'd
Our abbess from the parlour. There I saw him,
Oft as he came alone.
Coun. He talk'd of love,
And woo'd thee for his bride.
Ade. He did.
Coun. ('Tis well;
This is the stranger I beheld this morning.)
His father dead, he hastes to take possession
Of his paternal fortunes—is't not so?
Ade. He sorrows for a father—something too
He utter'd of a large inheritance
That should be his—in truth I mark'd it not.
Coun. But when he spoke of love, thy very soul
Hung on his lips. Say, canst thou not repeat
Each word, each syllable? His accent too
Thou noted'st: still it rings upon thine ear.
And then his eyes—they look'd such wond'rous truth;
Art thou not sure he cannot have deceiv'd thee?
Ade. Alas! my noble mistress, thou dost mock
Poor Adeliza—what can I reply?
Coun. The truth. Thy words have ever held its language.
Say, dost thou love this stranger? Hast thou pledg'd

* Dr Young relates that Mr Addison, on his death-bed, spoke in this manner to his pupil, lord Warwick.

Thy faith to him?
Ade. Angels forbid! What faith have I to give?
Can I dispose of aught without thy leave?
Coun. Insinuating softness!—still thou turn'st
Aside my question. Thou dost love this stranger.
Ade. Yes, with such love as that I feel for thee.
His virtues I revere: his earnest words
Sound like the precepts of a tender parent:
And next to thee, methinks I could obey him.
Coun. Ay, as his wife.
Ade. Oh! never. What, to lose him,
As thou thy Narbonne!
Coun. Check not, Adeliza,
Thy undevelop'd passion. Should this stranger
Prove what my wish has form'd, and what his words
Report him, it would bliss my woeful days
To see thee plac'd above the reach of want,
And distant from this residence of sorrow.
Ade. What! wouldst thou send me from thee! oh! for pity!
I cannot, will not leave thee. If thy goodness
Withdraws its bounty, at thy castle-gate
I'll wait, and beg those alms thy gracious hand
To none refuses. I shall see thee pass,
And pass'd, will kiss thy footsteps——wilt thou spurn me?
Well then, I'll die, and bless thee——Oh! this stranger!
'Tis he has done this; he has drawn thy anger
On thy poor ward!—I'll never see him more.
Coun. Be calm, my lovely orphan! hush thy fears.
Heav'n knows how fondly, anxiously I love thee!
The stranger's not to blame. Myself will task him,
And know if he deserves thee. Now retire,
Nor slack thy duty to th' expiring saint.
A lover must not weigh against a friend.
[*Exit* ADE.
And lo! where comes the friar. 'Twere not fit
He knew my purpose. Benedict, I fear,
Has views on this side heav'n.

SCENE III.

Countess, BENEDICT.

Ben. The dew of grace
Rest on this dwelling!
Coun. Thanks, my ghostly friend.
But sure, or I mistake, in your sad eye
I spell affliction's signature. What woes
Call for the scanty balm this hand can pour?
Ben. You, lady, and you only, need that balm.
Coun. To tutor my unapt and ill school'd nature
You come then—Good, my confessor, a truce
With doctrines and authority. If aught
Can medicate a soul unsound like mine,
Good deeds must operate the healthful change,
And penance cleanse it to receive the blessing.
Shall I for faith, shall I, for but believing
What 'tis my int'rest to believe, efface
The stains, which, though believing, I contracted?
Ben. Lady, your subtle wit, like daring infants,
Sports with a weight will crush it—but no more.
It is not mine to argue, but pronounce.
The church, on rock of adamant establish'd,
Now inch by inch disputes not its domain.
Heav'n's law promulg'd, it rests obedience follow.
And when supreme, it taxes that obedience,
Not at impracticable, vain perfection,
But rates its prodigality of blessings
At the slight credence of its pow'r to grant them;
Shall man with stoic pride reject the boon,
And cry, we will do more, we will deserve it?
Coun. Deserve it!—oh! have all your sainted hosts,
Your choirs of martyrs, or your clouds of cherubim,
Deserv'd to feel the transport but of hope?
Away; nor tell me of this holy juggle
'Twixt faith and conscience. Shall the latter roam,
Wasting and spoiling with a ruffian hand,
While her accomplice faith, wrapt up at home
In proud security of self-existence,
Thinks that existence shall absolve them both?
Ben. 'Twas not to war with words, so heav'n's my judge,
That your poor-rated servant sought your presence.
I came with charitable friendly purpose
To sooth—but wherefore mitigate your griefs?
You mock my friendship, and miscall my zeal.
Since then to counsel, comfort, and reproof
Obdurate—learn the measure of your woes.
Learn, if the mother's fortitude can brave
The bolt the woman's arrogance defied.
Coun. The mother, said'st thou?
Ben. Yes, imperious dame:
Yes, 'twas no vision rais'd by dreams and fumes,
Begot 'twixt nightly fear and indigestion:
Nor was it artifice and pious fraud,
When but this morning I announc'd thy Edmund
Was number'd with the dead—
Coun. Priest, mock me not!
Nor dally with a mother's apprehension.
Lives, or lives not, my son?
Ben. Woman, heav'n mocks thee!
On Buda's plain thy slaughter'd Edmund lies.
An unbeliever's weapon cleft his heart:
But 'twas thy unbelief that pois'd the shaft,
And sped its aim.
Coun. To heav'n's high will I bow me.
Oh! may its joys be open to his soul,
Though clos'd to mine for ever!
Ben. Then you lov'd him?
Coun. Lov'd him!—oh! nature, bleeding at my heart,
Hear'st thou this? Lov'd him!—ha!—whither!—rage,
Be dumb—Now, listen, monk, nor dare reply
Beyond my purpose. In the grave, thou say'st,
My Edmund sleeps—how did'st thou learn his fate?

Bened. No angel whisper'd it; no dæmon spoke it.
Thou, by the self-same means I learn'd, may'st learn it.
Coun. Be brief.
Bened. Then—but what boots his life or death
To a poor taunted friar?—Benedict,
Leave this proud mistress of the fleeting hour,
Ere the destroying angel's kindling brand
Smokes in the tow'rs of Narbonne—
Coun. Hold! presumptuous!
I am thy mistress yet: nor will I brook
Such insolent reproof. Produce thy warrant,
Assure my Edmund's death—or dread his vengeance!
Severely shall he question ev'ry throb
His agonizing mother now endures.
Bened. My warrant is at hand—
[*Goes out and returns with* EDMUND.

SCENE IV.

Countess, BENEDICT, EDMUND.

Bened. This gentleman
Beheld thy Edmund breathless on the ground.
Coun. Ha! is this sorcery? or is't my husband? [*Swoons.*
Edm. Stand off, and let me clasp her in my arms!
The flame of filial fondness shall revive
The lamp of life, repay the breath she gave,
And waken all the mother in her soul.
Bened. Ha! who art thou then?
Edm. Do not my tears tell thee?
Look up! O ever dear! behold thy son!
It is thy Edmund's voice; blest, if thy eyes
Awake to bless him—Soft! her pulse returns;
She breathes—oh! speak. Dear parent, mother, hear!
'Tis Edmund—Friar, wherefore is this horror?
Am I then deadly to her eyes?—Dumb still!
Speak, though it be to curse me—I have kill'd her!
My brain grows hot—
Bened. My lord, restrain your passion;
See! she revives—
Edm. Oh! if these lips that quiver
With dread of thy disdain, have force to move thee,
With nature's, duty's, or affection's voice,
Feel how I print thy hand with burning zeal,
Though tortur'd at this awful interval!
Art thou, or not, a mother?
Coun. Ha! where am I?
Why do you hold me? Was it not my Narbonne?
I saw him—on my soul I did—
Edm. Alas!
She raves—recall thy wand'ring apprehension—
It was no phantom: at thy feet behold—
Coun. Ha! whom! quick, answer—Narbonne, dost thou live?
Or comest to transport me to perdition?
Bened. Madam, behold your son: he kneels for pardon.
And I, I innocent, I ignorant
Of what he was, implore it too—
Coun. Distraction!
What means this complicated scene of horrors?
Why thus assail my splitting brain?—be quick—
Art thou my husband wing'd from other orbs
To taunt my soul? What is this dubious form,
Impress'd with ev'ry feature I adore,
And every lineament I dread to look on!
Art thou my dead or living son?
Edm. I am
Thy living Edmund. Let these scalding tears
Attest th' existence of thy suff'ring son.
Coun. Ah! touch me not—
Edm. How!—in that cruel breast
Revive then all sensations, but affection?
Why so ador'd the memory of the father,
And so abhorr'd the presence of the son?
But now, and to thy eyes I seem'd my father.
At least for that resemblance-sake embrace me.
Coun. Horror on horror! blasted be thy tongue!
What sounds are these?
Bened. Lady, though I excuse not
This young lord's disobedience, his contrition
Bespeaks no rebel principle. I doubt not,
Your blessing first obtain'd and gracious pardon,
But soon as morning streaks the ruddy east,
He will obey your pleasure, and return
To stranger climes.
Edm. 'Tis false; I will not hence.
I have been fool'd too long, too long been patient,
Nor are my years so green as to endure
The manacles of priests and nurseries.
Am I not Narbonne's prince? who shall rule here
But Narbonne? Have I sapp'd my country's laws,
Or play'd the tyrant? Who shall banish me?
Am I recreant knight? Has cowardice
Disgrac'd the line of heroes I am sprung from?
Shall I then skulk, hide my inglorious head?
Or does it please your worship's gravity
Dispatch me on some sleeveless pilgrimage,
Like other noble fools, to win you empires,
While you at home mock our credulity,
The masters of our wealth, our states, and wives?
Coun. [*Aside.*] (Brave youth! there spoke his sire! How my soul yearns
To own its genuine offspring!)—Edmund, hear me!
Thou art my son, and I will prove a mother.
But I'm thy sov'reign too. This state is mine.
Learn to command, by learning to obey.
Though frail my sex, I have a soul as masculine
As any of thy race. This very monk,
Lord as thou thinkest of my ductile conscience,
Quails—look if 'tis not true—when I command.
Retire thee to the village. 'Tis not ripe
As yet my purpose—Benedict, attend me.
To-morrow, Edmund, shalt thou learn my pleasure. [*Exeunt Countess and* BENEDICT.
Edm. [*Alone.*] Why, this is majesty. Sounds of such accent
Ne'er struck mine ear till now. Commanding sex!
Strength, courage, all our boasted attributes,
Want estimation; ev'n the pre-eminence

We vaunt in wisdom, seems a borrow'd ray,
When virtue deigns to speak with female organs.
Yes, O my mother, I will learn to obey:
I will believe, that, harsh as thy decrees,
They wear the warrant of benign intention.
Make but the blooming Adeliza mine,
And bear, of me unquestion'd, Narbonne's sceptre;
Till life's expiring lamp by intervals
Throws but a fainter and a fainter flash,
And then resumes its wasted oil no more. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE *continues.*

BENEDICT, MARTIN.

Mart. I know thy spirit well; know how it labours,
When curb'd and driv'n to wear the mask of art.
But till this hour I have not seen thy passions
Boil o'er the bounds of prudence. So impetuous,
And so reserv'd!

Bened. Mistake me not, good brother:
I want no confidence: I know thy faith.
But can I to thy naked eye unfold,
What I dare scarce reveal to my own bosom?
I would not know one half that I suspect,
Till I have acted as if not suspecting.

Mart. How, brother! thou a casuist! and apply
To thy own breast those damning subtleties,
Which cowards with half-winking consciences
Purchase of us, when they would sin secure,
And hope the penalty will all be ours!

Bened. Brother, this moment is too big with action
To waste on bootless curiosity.
When I try sins upon the touchstone conscience,
It is for others' use, not for my own.
'Tis time enough to make up our account,
When we confess and kneel for absolution.

Mart. Still does thy genius soar above mankind!
How many fathers of our holy church
In Benedict I view!

Bened. No flattery, brother.
'Tis true the church owes Benedict some thanks.
For her, I have forgot I am a man.
For her, each virtue from my breast I banish.
No laws I know but her prosperity;
No country, but her boundless acquisitions.
Who dares be true to country, king, or friend,
If enemies to Rome, are Benedict's foes.

Mart. Has it then gone so far! Does she speak out?
Is Edmund too infected with like errors?

Bened. Both, brother, both are thinking heretics.
I could forgive them, did some upstart sect
With sharper rigours charm their headlong zeal.
But they, in sooth, must reason—curses light
On the proud talent! 'twill at last undo us.
When men are gorg'd with each absurdity
Their subtile wits can frame, or we adopt;
For very novelty they'll fly to sense,
And we shall fall before that idol, fashion.

Mart. Fear not a reign so transient. Statesmen too
Will join to stem the torrent: or new follies
Replace the old. Each chieftain that attacks us
Must grow the pope of his own heresy.
E'en stern philosophy, if once triumphant,
Shall frame some jargon, and exact obedience
To metaphysic nonsense worse than ours.
The church is but a specious name for empire,
And will exist wherever fools have fears.
Rome is no city; 'tis the human heart;
And there suffice it if we plant our banners.
Each priest cannot command—and thence come sects.
Obdurate Zeno and our great Augustine
Are of one faith, and differ but for power.

Bened. So be it—therefore interest bids us crush
This cockatrice and her egg: or we shall see
The singing saints of Savoy's neighbouring vale
Fly to the covert of her shadowy wings,
And foil us at our own dexterity.
Already to those vagrants she inclines;
As if the rogues, that preach reform to others,
Like idiots, minded to reform themselves.

Mart. Be cautious, brother: you may lose the lady.

Bened. She is already lost—or ne'er was ours.
I cannot dupe, and therefore must destroy her;
Involve her house in ruin so prodigious,
That neither she nor Edmund may survive it.

Mart. How may this be accomplish'd?

Bened. Ask me not.
From hints long treasur'd up, from broken phrase
In phrenzy dropp'd, but vibrating from truth;
Nay, from her caution to explain away
What the late tempest of her soul had utter'd,
I guess her fatal secret—or, no matter—
Say I do not—by what she has forbidden,
I know what should be done—then haste thee, brother;
Facilitate Count Edmund's interview
With Adeliza; nourish their young passion—
Curse them—and if you can—why—join their hands.

Mart. I tremble!

Bened. Dastard, tremble, if we fail.
What can we fear, when we have ruined them?

(A deep-toned Voice is heard.) Forbear!

Bened. Ha! whence that sound!

(Voice again.) Forbear!

Bened. Again!
Comes it from heav'n or hell!

(Voice again.) Forbear!
Mart. Good angels,
Protect me!—Benedict, thy unholy purpose—

SCENE II.

BENEDICT, MARTIN, ADELIZA, *Friars.*

[*A procession of friars, chanting a funeral anthem, and followed by* ADE. *advance slowly from a cloister at the end of the stage.*]

The ANTHEM.

Forbear! forbear! forbear!
The pious are heav'n's care.
Lamentations ill become us,
When the good are ravish'd from us.
The pangs of death but smooth the way
To visions of eternal day.

Bened. [*Aside to* MART.] Now, man of aspin conscience! lo! the gods,
That sentence Benedict's unholy purpose!
Art thou a priest? Wast thou initiated
In each fond mummery that subdues the vulgar,
And standest thou appall'd at our own thunders?
Mart. Who trembled first? It was thy guilty conscience
That gave the alarm to mine.
Bened. Peace, dotard, peace!
Nor when the lamb is nigh, must eagles wrangle.
Fair saint, give us to know why flow these tears;
[*To* ADE.
Why sighs that gentle bosom; and why chant ye
That heav'n-invoking, soul-dissolving dirge?
Ade. Ah! holy father, art thou then to learn
The pious abbess is at peace! We go
To bear her parting blessing to the countess.
Bened. It must not be. Occasions of much import
Engross her faculties. By me she wills you
Restrain your steps within the cloister's pale,
Nor grant access but to one stranger knight.
Ade. Is't possible? Can my dear mistress bar
Her faithful handmaid from her gracious presence?
Shall I not pour my sorrows in her bosom,
And moisten it with grief and gratitude?
Two friends were all poor Adeliza's wealth.
Lo! one is gone to plead the orphan's cause.
My patroness, like Tobit's guardian spirit,*
Confirms my steps, and points to realms of glory.
She will not quit me in this vale of bondage?
She must be good, who teaches what is goodness.
Bened. (Indeed! my pretty prattler!—then am I [*Aside.*
As sound a saint as e'er the rubric boasted.
—Ah! 'tis the countess—now for my obedience.)
Young lady, much I marvel at these murmurs.
[*To* ADE.
Just sense and sober piety still dictate
The countess's commands. With truth I say it,
My sins diminish, as I copy her.

SCENE III.

Countess, ADELIZA, BENEDICT, *and* MARTIN.

Coun. What voices heard I? Does my rebel son
Attempt against my peace?—Ha! Adeliza!
I charg'd thee guard thy convert—wherefore then
This disobedience?
Bened. Madam, I was urging
The fitness of your orders; but vain youth
Scoff'd my importunate rebuke—
Ade. Oh! no.
I am the thing you made me. Crush me, spurn me,
I will not murmur. Should you bid me die,
I know 'twere meant in kindness.
Coun. Bid thee die!
My own detested life but lingers round thee!
Ha! what a glance was there! it spoke resemblance
To all I hate, adore—My child, retire:
I am much discompos'd—the good old abbess
Claims thy attendance.
Ade. Mercy crown her soul!
She needs no duty we can pay her now.
Coun. How! art thou desolate? not a friend left
To guard thy innocence?—Oh! wretched maid!
Must thou be left to spoilers? or worse, worse,
To the fierce onset of thy own dire passions?
Oh! is it come to this?
Ade. My noble mistress,
Can Adeliza want a minist'ring angel,
When shelter'd by thy wing?—yet Benedict
Says, I must shun this hospitable roof.
Indeed I thought it hard.
Coun. Did Benedict,
Did he audacious dare forbid my child,
My little orphan to embrace her—curses
Swell in my throat—hence—or they fall on thee.
Ade. Alas! for pity! how have I offended?
Bened. Madam, it is the pupil of your care,
Your favour'd child—
Coun. Who told thee so? Be dumb
For ever—What! art thou combin'd with Edmund,
To dash me down the precipice? Churchman, I tell thee,
I view it with impatience. I could leap
And meet the furies—but must she fall with me?
Bened. (Yes, and thy Edmund too) [*Aside.*—Be patient, lady:
This fair domain, thou know'st, acknowledges
The sovereignty of the church. Thy rebel son
Dares not attempt—
Coun. Again I bid thee peace.
There is no question of Lord Edmund. Leave us:
I have to talk with her alone.
Bened. (Now tremble [*Aside to* MAR.
At voices supernatural; and forfeit

* Alluding to a picture of Salvator Rosa, in which the story is thus told.

The spoils the tempest throws into our lap.)
[*Exeunt* BENED. *and* MAR.

SCENE IV.

Countess, ADELIZA.

Coun. Now, Adeliza, summon all thy courage,
Retrace my precepts past; nor let a tear
Profane a moment that's worth martyrdom.
Remember patience is the christian's courage.
Stoics have bled, and demigods have died.
A christian's task is harder—'tis to suffer.
Ade. Alas! have I not learnt the bitter lesson?
Have I not borne thy woes? What is to come
Can tax my patience with a ruder trial?
Coun. Oh! yes, thou must do more. Adversity
Has various arrows. When the soul is steel'd
By meditation to encounter sorrow,
The foe of man shifts his artillery,
And drowns in luxury and careless softness
The breast he could not storm. Canst thou bear wealth,
And pleasure's melting couch? Thou hast known virtue
But at a scanty board. She has awak'd thee
To chilling vapours in the midnight vault,
And beckon'd thee to hardships, tears, and penance.
Wilt thou acknowledge the divine instructress,
When syren pleasures lap thee in delights?
Ade. If such the witchery that waits on guilt,
Why should I seek th' enchantress and her wiles?
The virgin veil shall guard my spotless hours,
Assure my peace, and saint me for hereafter.
Coun. It cannot be—
To Narbonne thou must bid a last adieu!
And with the stranger knight depart a bride.
Ade. Unhappy me! too sure I have o'erburthen'd
Thy charity, if thou would'st drive me from thee.
Restrain thy alms, dear lady. I have learnt
From our kind sister-hood the needle's art.
My needle and thy smiles will life support!
Pray let me bring my last embroidery;
'Tis all by my own hand. Indeed I meant it
For my kind lady's festival.
Coun. Great justice!
Does this stroke pierce not deep enough? These tears,
Wrung from my vital fondness, scald they not
Worse than the living coal that scars the limbs?
Ade. Alas! thou hear'st not! What grief o'erwhelms thee?
Why darts thy eye into my inmost soul?
Then vacant, motionless, arrests its course,
And seems not to perceive what it reads there?
My much-lov'd patroness!
Coun. O Adeliza,
Thy words now slake, and now augment my fever!
But oh! ere reason quits this lab'ring frame,
While I dare weep these tears of anguish o'er thee,
Unutterable, petrifying anguish!
Hear my last breath. Avoid the scorpion Pleasure.
Death lurks beneath the velvet of his lip,
And but to think him over, is perdition!
—O retrospect of horror!—To the altar!
Haste, Adeliza,—vow thou wilt be wretched!
Ade. Dost thou then doom me to eternal sorrows?
Hast thou deceiv'd me? Is not virtue happiness?
Coun. I know not that. I know that guilt is torture.
Ade. Sure Pestilence has flapp'd his baleful wing,
And shed his poison o'er thy saint-like reason!
When thou so patient, holy, so resign'd,
Doubtest of virtue's health, of virtue's peace.
—But 'tis to try me—look upon this relic:
'Twas the good abbess's bequest. 'Twill chase
The fiend that walks at twilight!
Coun. How she melts me!
What have I said?—my lovely innocence,
Thou art my only thought—O! wast thou form'd
The child of sin?—and dare I not embrace thee?
Must I with eager ecstacy gaze on thee,
Yet curse the hour that stamp'd thee with a being!
Ade. Alas! was I then born the child of sin!
Who were my parents? I will pray for them.
Coun. Oh! if the bolt must come, here let it strike me. [*Flinging herself on the ground.*
Nature! these feelings were thy gift. Thou know'st
How ill I can resist thy forceful impulse.
If these emotions are imputed to me,
I have one sin I cannot yet repent of!
Ade. Oh! raise thee from the earth. Shall I behold thee
Prostrate, embracing an unfriended beggar?
Or dost thou mock me still? What is my lot?
Wilt thou yet cherish me? Or do the great
Exalt us but in sport, lend us a taste,
A vision of enjoyment, and then dash us
To poverty, more poignant by comparison?
Sure I could never wanton with affliction!
Coun. Ah! canst thou doubt this conflict of the soul!
Mock thee!—oh! yes, there are such savage natures,
That will deride thy woes—and thou must bear it—
With foul reproach will gall thy spotless soul,
And taunt thee with a crime past thy conceiving.
Oh! 'tis to shield thee from this world of sorrows,
That thou must fly, must wed, must never view
The tow'rs of Narbonne more; must never know
The doom reserv'd for thy sad patroness!
Ade. Who threatens thy dear life! recall thy son,
His valiant arm will stem a host of foes,
Replace thy lord, and woo thee to be happy.
Coun. Ha! little imp of darkness! dost thou wear
That angel form to gird me with upbraidings!
Fly, ere my rage forget distinction, nature,

And make a medley of unheard-of crimes!
Fly, ere it be too late—
Ade. For pity!
Coun. Hence!
Pity would bid me stab thee, while the charm
Of ignorance locks thee in its happy slumbers.
Ade. Alas! she raves—I will call help. [*Exit.*
[*Countess alone. After a long pause, in which she looks tenderly after* ADELIZA.
She's gone.
——That pang, great God, was my last sacrifice!
Now recollect thyself, my soul! consummate
The pomp of horror, with tremendous coolness.
'Tis fit that reason punish passion's crime.
——Reason!——alas! 'tis one of my convulsions!
Now it empow'rs me past myself: now leaves me
Exhausted, spiritless, eying with despair
The heights I cannot reach. Then Madness comes,
Imperial fool! and promises to waft me
Beyond the grin of scorn—but who sits there,
Supereminent?——'tis Conscience!—phrenzy shield me!
I know the foe—see! see! he points his lance!
He plunges it all flaming in my soul,
And down I sink, lost in eternal anguish!
[*Runs out.*

SCENE V.

BENEDICT, ADELIZA.

Ade. She is not here. Shall we not follow her?
Such agonies of passion! sure some demon
Assaults her. Thou shalt pray by her. Indeed
I tremble for her life.
Bened. Thou know'st her not.
Her transport is fictitious. 'Tis the coinage
Of avarice and caprice. Dost thou not see
Her bounty wearies? While thy babbling years
Wore the trick of novelty, thou wast her plaything.
The charity of the great must be amus'd.
Mere merit surfeits it; affliction kills it.
The sick must jest and gambol to attract
Their pity—Come, I'll warrant thou hast wept,
And told her heav'n will register each ducat
Her piety had spar'd to clothe and feed thee.
Go to; thou hast estrang'd her; and she means
To drive thee hence, lest thou upbraid her change.
Ade. Upbraid my patroness! I! I upbraid her,
Who see her now the angel that she'll be!
How knew I virtue, goodness, but from her!
Her lessons taught me heav'n; her life reveal'd it.
The wings of gratitude must bear me thither,
Or I deserve not paradise.
Bened. Thou art young.
Thy novice ear imbibes each silver sound,
And deems the music warbled all by truth.
Gray hairs are not fool'd thus. I know this countess,
An arrant heretic. She scoffs the church.
When did her piety adorn our altars?
What holy garments glisten with her gifts?
The fabric of our convent threatens ruin—
Does she repair it?—no. On lazy lepers,
On soldiers maim'd, and swearing from the wars,
She lavishes her wealth——but note it, young one;
Her days are number'd; and thou shalt do wisely
To quit her ere the measure is complete.
Ade. Alas! she bids me go. She bids me wed
The stranger knight that woo'd me at our parlour.
Bened. And thou shalt take her at her word. Myself
Will join your hands—and, lo! in happy hour
Who comes to meet her boon.

SCENE VI.

EDMUND, BENEDICT, ADELIZA.

Edm. In tears!—that cowl
Shall not protect th' injurious tongue, that dares
Insult thy innocence—for sure, thou dear one,
Thou hast no sins to weep.
Bened. My gracious lord,
Yourself and virgin coyness must be chidden,
If my fair scholar wears the mien of sadness;
'Tis but a blush that melts in modest showers.
Edm. Unriddle, priest. My soul is too impatient
To wait th' impertinence of flow'ry dialect.
Bened. Then briefly thus. The countess wills me join
Your hand with this fair maiden's—now, my lord,
Is my poor language nauseous!
Edm. Is it possible?
Dost thou consent, sweet passion of my soul!
May I then clasp thee to my heart?
Ade. Forbear!
It must not be—Thou shalt not wed a beggar.
Edm. A beggar! Thou art riches, opulence;
The flaming ruby and the dazzling diamond,
Set in the world's first diadem, could not add
A ray to thy least charm—for pity, grant me
To breathe my warmth into this marble hand.
Ade. Never!——This orphan, this abandon'd wanderer,
Taunted with poverty, with shameful origin,
Dower'd with no lot but scorn, shall ne'er bestow
That, her sole portion, on a lordly husband.
Bened. My lord, the countess is my gracious mistress:
My duty bade me to report her words.
It seems her charities circumscribe her wishes.
This goodly maiden has full long experienc'd
Her amplest bounty. Other piteous objects
Call for her largess. Lovely Adeliza
Plac'd in your arms can never feel affliction.
This the good countess knows.—
Edm. By my sire's soul
I will not thank her. Has she dar'd to scorn thee,
Thou beauteous excellence?—then, from this hour

Thou art her equal. In her very presence
I will espouse thee. Let us seek the proud one.
—Nay, no resistance, love!
Bened. (By heav'n all's lost, [*Aside.*
Should they meet now)——My lord, a word.
The maiden [*Aside to* EDMUND.
Is tutor'd to such awe, she ne'er will yield
Consent, should but a frown dart from the countess.
But now, and she enjoin'd your marriage. Better
Profit of that behest—
Edm. I tell thee, monk,
My haughty soul will not—
Bened. Pray be advis'd.
Heav'n knows how dear I tender your felicity.
The chapel is few paces hence—nay, lead her
With gentle wooings, nor alarm her fears.
Arriv'd there, I will speedily pronounce
The solemn words—
Edm. Well, be it so. My fair one,
This holy man advises well. To heaven
We will address our vows, and ask its pleasure.
Come, come; I will not be refus'd——
Ade. Yes, heav'n!
To thee I fly; thou art my only refuge.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE *continues,*

Enter BENEDICT.

Bened. The business is dispatch'd. Their hands are join'd.
The puling moppet struggled with her wishes;
Invok'd each saint to witness her refusal:
Nor heeded, though I swore their golden harps
Were tun'd to greet her Hymeneal hour.
Th' impetuous count, fir'd with th' impure suggestion,
As if descending clouds had spread their pillows
To meet the pressure of his eager transports,
Would have forerun the rites. The maid affrighted
At such tumultuous, unaccustom'd onset,
Sunk lifeless on the pavement. Hastily
I mumbled o'er the spell that binds them fast,
Like an envenom'd robe, to scorch each other
With mutual ruin———Thus am I reveng'd.
Proud dame of Narbonne, lo! a bare-foot monk
Thus pays thy scorn, thus vindicates his altars.
Nor while this woollen frock shall wrap our order,
Shall e'en the lillied monarchs of our realm
Be plac'd so high, but a poor friar's knife †
Shall fell their tow'ring grandeur to the earth,
Oft as they scant obedience to the church.

SCENE II.

BENEDICT, *Porter.*

Por. Ah! woe of woes! good father, haste thee in,
And speak sweet words of comfort to our mistress,
Her brain is much disturb'd—I fear some spell,
Or naughty bev'rage—will you not in and pray by her?
In sooth she needs your pray'rs.
Bened. She scorns my pray'rs. [*Coldly.*
Por. Oh! no; but now she call'd for you. Pray seek her.
Bened. I can administer no comfort to her.
Por. Yes, yes, you can. They say the foul fiend dreads
A scholar—Tut, your holy wit can pose him,
Or bind him to the red waves of the ocean.
Oh! he afflicts her gentle spirit, and vomits
Strange menaces and terrible from her mouth!
Then he is sullen; gags her lab'ring lips,
And she replies not—
Bened. Good man exorcist,
Thy pains are unavailing. Her sins press her.
Guilt has unhing'd her reason.
Por. Beshrew thy heart,
Thou dost asperse her. I know those are paid
For being saints that—
Bened. Stop that tongue profane:
Thou art infected with her heresies.
Judgments already have o'erta'en thy mistress.
Thou, at thy peril, leave her to her fate.
Por. Father, belike there is a different heaven
For learned clerks and such poor men as I am.
Me it behoves to have such humble virtues
As suit my simple calling. To my masters
For raiment, food, for salary, and protection,
My honest heart owes gratitude. They took me
From drudgery to guard their honour'd persons.
Why am I call'd a man of worship? Why,
As up the chancel I precede my lady,
Do th' vassals of the castle, rang'd in rows,
Bow e'en to Peter!—why? but, by the rood,
Because she plac'd this silver-garnish'd staff
In Peter's hand. Why? but because this robe,
Floating with seemly tufts, was her gift too.
For honours of such note owe I not thanks!
Were my life much to sacrifice for hers?
Bened. Peace with thy saucy lecture, or harangue
Thy maudling fellows o'er the hall's dull embers
With this thy gossiping morality.—
Now answer——mentions she her son?
Por. Ah me!
I had forgotten—this old brain——'tis true,
'Tis very true—she raves upon her son,
And thinks he came in vision.
Bened. 'Twas no vision.
Por. How! heav'nly fathers!

† Alluding to the assassinations of Henry III. and IV.

Bened. He has spoken with her.
Por. And I not see him—go to; it could not be.
How did he pass the gate?
Bened. I tell thee, Edmund,
Thy quondam master's son, has seen his mother,
Is but few paces hence.
Por. Oh! joyous sounds!
Where is my noble lord?
Bened. Here—and undone. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

FLORIAN, BENEDICT, *Porter.*

Flor. Sure the foul fogs, that hang in lazy clouds
O'er yonder moat, infect the moping air,
And steam with phrenzy's melancholy fumes.
But now and I met Edmund—with a voice
Appall'd and hollow like a parricide's,
He told me he was wedded. When I ask'd
To see his bride, he groan'd, and said his joys
Were blasted ere accomplished. As he urged
His suit, the maiden's tears and shrieks had struck
On his sick fancy like his mother's cries!
Th' idea writhing from his brain, had won
His eye-balls, and he thought he saw his mother!
—This ague of contagious bigotry
Has gain'd almost on me. Methinks yon monk
Might fell me with a chaplet——Edmund left me
Abruptly—I must learn this mystery.
Health to your rev'rence---[*To* BENEDICT.] Ha! my new acquaintance! [*To* PETER.
In tears, my good old friend! What! has the cricket
Chirp'd ominously—come, away with sorrow!
Joy marks this day its own.
Por. A joyful day!
The twentieth of September!—note it, sir,
Note it for th'ugliest of the calendar.
'Twas on this day—ay, this day sixteen years,
The noble count came to his death!
Flor. No matter:
Th' arrival of a nobler younger count
Shall mock prognostics past, and paint the year
With smiling white, fair fortune's favourite livery.
But tell me, father, tell me, has the countess [*To* BENEDICT.
Pardoned her son's return? Has she received him
With th' overflowings of a mother's joy?
Smiles she upon his wishes?—As I entered,
Methought I heard an Hymeneal accent.
And yet, it seems, the favour of your countenance
Wears not the benediction of rejoicing.
Ben. The countess must unfold her book of fate;
I am not skilled to read so dark a volume.
Flor. Oracular as the Delphic god!—good Peter,
Thy wit and mine are more upon a level.
Resolve me, has the countess seen lord Edmund?
Say, did she frown and chide? or bathe his cheek
With tears as warm as leaping blood?
Por. Oh! master,
You seem too good to mock our misery.
A soldier causes woe, but seldom jeers it.
Or know'st thou not—and sure 'twill pity thee!
The gracious countess, our kind lady—indeed
I trust they will return—is strangely chang'd!
Flor. By my good sword, thou shalt unriddle, priest!
What means this tale? What mintage is at work
To coin delusion, that this fair domain
May become holy patrimony? Thus
Teach you our matrons to defraud their issue
By artificial fits and acted ravings?
I have beheld your juggles, heard your dreams.
Th' imposture shall be known. These sixteen years
Has my friend Edmund pin'd in banishment:
While masses, mummings, goblins, and processions
Usurp'd his heritage, and made of Narbonne
A theatre of holy interludes
And sainted frauds. But day darts on your spells.
Th' enlightened age eschews your vile deceits,
And truth shall do mankind and Edmund justice.
Bened. Unhallow'd boy, I scorn thy contumely.
In camps and trenches vent thy lewd reproaches,
Blaspheming while ye tremble. Heav'n's true soldiers,
Endu'd with more than mortal courage, defy
Hosts numerous as the Pagan chivalry
Pour'd forth to crush the church's rising glories.
—But this is an enlighten'd age!—Behold
The triumphs of your sect! to yonder plains
Bend thy illumin'd eye! The Vaudois there,
Writhing in flames, and quiv'ring at th' approach
Of Rome's impending knife, attest the blessings
Conferr'd on their instructed ignorance!
Flor. Monstrous! unparallel'd! Are cries and groans
Of butcher'd conscientious men the hymns
With which you chant the victories of the church?
Do you afflict and laugh? stab and huzza?
—But I am dallying with my own impatience—
Where is this mother? I will tent her soul;
And warn thee, if I find suggestion's whisper
Has practis'd to the detriment of my friend,
Thy caitiff life shall answer to my sword,
Though shrin'd within the pillars of the Vatican.
Bened. Judge, heaven, betwixt us!
If, ere the dews of night shall fall, thou see'st not,
The cup of wrath pour'd out, and treble woes
O'ertake unheard-of crimes; call me false prophet,
Renounce my gods, and join thee to the impious!
Thou in thy turn, if truth lives on my lips,
Tremble! repent!——behold! the hour approaches!

SCENE IV.

Countess, FLORIAN, BENEDICT, *and Porter.*

Coun. I dare not shoot the gulph—ha! Benedict!
Thou art a priest, thy mission should be holy,

If thou beliest not heav'n—quick, do thy work!
If there is pow'r in pray'r, teach me some sounds
To charm my senses, lest my coward flesh
Recoil, and win the mastery o'er my will.
—'Tis not the wound; it is the consequence!
See! see! my Narbonne stands upon the brink,
And snatches from the readiest fury there
A blazing torch! he whirls it round my head,
And asks where are my children!
Por. Split, my heart,
At this sad sight!
Flor. Stand off! thou'rt an accomplice—
Madam, it was your morning's gracious pleasure
I should attend you. May I hope your pardon,
If I anticipate—
Coun. Ha! Who art thou?
Flor. Have you forgot me, lady?
Coun. Memory
Is full. A head, distract as mine, can hold
Two only objects, guilt and eternity!
Flor. No more of this. Time has abundant hours
For holy meditation. Nor have years
Trac'd such deep admonition on your cheek,
As call for sudden preparation—
Coun. Prayer [*Wildly.*
Can do no more: its efficacy lost—
What must be, must be soon—He will return.
Flor. He is return'd, your son—have you not seen him?
Coun. Would I had never!
Flor. Come, this is too much.
This villainous monk has stepp'd 'twixt you and nature;
And misreported of the noblest gentleman
That treads on Christian ground—Are you a mother?
Are legends dearer to you than your son?
Think you 'tis piety to gorge these miscreants,
And drive your child from your embrace—
Coun. Ye saints!
This was the dæmon prompted it—avaunt!
He beckons me—I will not—lies my lord
Not bleeding in the porch? I'll tear my hair
And bathe his wounds—Where's Beatrice!—monster! monster!
She leads the dæmon—see! they spread the couch!
No, I will perish with my Narbonne—Oh!
My strength, my reason fail—darkness surrounds me!
To-morrow! never will to-morrow come!
Let me die here! [*Sinks on a bench.*
Flor. This is too much for art,
Chill damps sit on her brow: her pulse replies not.
Ben. No; 'tis fictitious all—'twas I inspir'd
The horrors she has been so kind to utter
At my suggestion.
Flor. That insulting sneer
Speaks more the devil than if thy words were serious.
Be her distraction counterfeit or real,
Her sex demands compassion or assistance.
But she revives!
Coun. Is death then past! my brain
Beats not its wonted tempest—in the grave
There is peace then!
Flor. Her agony abates.
Look up, and view your friends.
Coun. Alas! I fear me,
This is life still!—am I not in my castle?
Sure I should know this garden—good old Peter!
My honest servant, thou I see wilt never
Quit thy poor mistress!—kind old man, he weeps!
Por. Indeed it is for joy—how fares my lady?
Coun. Exhausted, Peter, that I have not strength
To be distracted—ha! your looks betray
Tremendous inuendoes!—gracious heaven!
Have I said aught—has wildness—trust me, sirs,
In these sad fits my unhing'd fancy wanders
Beyond the compass of things possible.
Sometimes, an angel of excelling brightness,
I seem to whirl the orbs and launch the comet;
Then hideous wings with forked points array me,
And I suggest strange crimes to shuddering matrons—
Sick fancy must be pardon'd.
Ben. (Artful woman! [*Aside.*
Thou subtle emblem of thy sex, compos'd
Of madness and deceit—but since thy brain
Has lost its poize, I will send those shall shake it
Beyond recovery of its reeling bias.) [*Exit.*
[*Countess makes a sign to* PETER *to retire.*

SCENE V.

Countess, FLORIAN.

Coun. This interval is well—'tis thy last boon,
Tremendous Providence! and I will use it
As 'twere th' elixir of descending mercy:
No, not a drop shall waste—accept my thanks!
Preserve my reason! and preserve my child!
—Stranger, thy years are green; perhaps may mock
A woman's words, a mother's woe!—but honour,
If I believe this garb, is thy profession.
Hast thou not dealt in blood!—then thou hast heard
The dying groan, and sin's despairing accent.
Struck it not on thy soul? Recall it, sir!
What then was thy sensation, feel for me!
Flor. I shudder, listen, pity, and respect thee!
Coun. Resolve my anxious heart. Though vagrant pleasure,
Th' ebriety of youth, and, worse than passion,
Example, lead thee to the strumpet vice;
Say, if beneath the waves of dissipation,
The germ of virtue blossoms in thy soul?
Flor. A soldier's honour is his virtue. Gowmen
Wear it for show, and barter it for gold,
And have it still. A soldier and his honour
Exist together, and together perish.
Coun. I do believe thee. Thus my Narbonne thought.
Then hear me, child of honour! Canst thou cherish
Unblemish'd innocence? wilt thou protect it?
Wilt thou observe its wand'rings? call it back,

Confine it to the path that leads to happiness?
Hast thou that genuine heroism of soul
To hug the little fondling sufferer,
When nestling in thy bosom, drown'd in blushes,
Nor cast her from thee, while a grinning world
Reviles her with a mother's foul misdeeds?
Flor. My arm is sworn to innocence distrest;
Point out the lovely mourner.
Coun. 'Tis enough,
Nor suffer th' ebbing moments more inquiry.
My orphan shall be thine—nay, start not, sir,
Your loves are known to me. Wealth past th' ambition
Of Gallia's proudest baron shall endow her.
Within this casket is a monarch's ransom;
Ten thousand ducats more are lodg'd within;
All this is thine with Adeliza's hand.
Flor. With Adeliza!
Coun. Ha! dost thou recoil?
Dost thou not love her?
Flor. I love Adeliza!
Lady, recal thy wand'ring memory.
Coun. Dost thou reject her? and has hope beguil'd me
In this sad only moment? Hast thou dar'd
With ruffian insolence gaze on her sweetness,
And mark it for an hour of wanton dalliance?
Oh! I will guard my child, though gaping dæmons
Howl with impatience!
Flor. Most rever'd of matrons!
Though youth and rosy joy flush on my cheek,
Though the licentious camp and rapine's holiday
Have been my school; deem not so reprobate
My morals, that my eye would note no distance
Between the harlot's glance and my friend's bride.
Coun. Thy friend! what friend?
Flor. Lord Edmund—
Coun. What o him?
Flor. Is Adeliza's lord; her wedded bridegroom.
Coun. Confusion! phrenzy! blast me, all ye furies!
Edmund and Adeliza! when! where! how!
Edmund wed Adeliza! quick, unsay
The monstrous tale—oh! prodigy of ruin!
Does my own son then boil with fiercer fires
Than scorch'd his impious mother's madding veins?
Did reason reassume its shatter'd throne,
But as spectatress of this last of horrors?
Oh! let my dagger drink my heart's black blood,
And then present my hell-born progeny
With drops of kindred sin!—that were a torch
Fit to light up such loves! and fit to quench them!
Flor. What means this agony? didst thou not grant
The maiden to his wishes?
Coun. Did I not couple
Distinctions horrible! plan unnatural rites
To grace my funeral pile, and meet the furies
More innocent than those I leave behind me!
Flor. Amazement!—I will hasten—grant, ye pow'rs!
My speed be not too late! [*Exit.*
Coun. Globe of the world,
If thy frame split not with such crimes as these,
It is immortal!

SCENE VI.

Countess, EDMUND, ADELIZA.

EDMUND *and* ADELIZA *enter at the opposite door from which* FLORIAN *went out. They kneel to the Countess.*

Edm. Dear parent, look on us, and bless your children!
Coun. My children! horror! horror! yes, too sure
Ye are my children!—Edmund, loose that hand;
'Tis poison to thy soul!—hell has no venom
Like a child's touch!—oh! agonizing thought!
—Who made this marriage? whose unhallow'd breath
Pronounc'd th' incestuous sounds!
Edm. Incest! good heavens!
Coun. Yes, thou devoted victim! let thy blood
Curdle to stone! perdition circumvents thee!
Lo! where this monster stands! thy mother! mistress!
The mother of thy daughter, sister, wife!
The pillar of accumulated horrors!
Hear! tremble!—and then marry, if thou dar'st!
Edm. Yes, I do tremble, though thy words are phrenzy.
So black must be the passions that inspir'd it,
I shudder for thee! pitying duty shudders!
Coun. For me!—O Edmund, I have burst the bond
Of every tie—when thou shalt know the crimes,
In which this fury did involve thy youth,
It will seem piety to curse me, Edmund!
Oh! impious night!—ha! is not that my lord!
He shakes the curtains of the nuptial couch,
And starts to find a son there! [*Wildly.*
Edm. Gracious heaven!
Grant that these shocking images be raving!
Ade. Sweet lady, be compos'd——indeed I thought
This marriage was thy will—but we will break it—
Benedict shall discharge us from our vows.
Coun. Thou gentle lamb, from a fell tyger sprung,
Unknowing half the miseries that await thee!
—Oh! they are innocent—Almighty pow'r!—
[*Kneels, but rises again hastily.*
Ha! dare I pray! for others intercede!
I pray for them, the cause of all their woe!
—But for a moment give me leave, despair!
For a short interval lend me that reason
Thou gavest, heav'n, in vain!—it must be known
The fulness of my crime; or, innocent, these
May plunge them in new horrors. Not a word
Can 'scape me, but will do the work of thunder,
And blast these moments I regain from madness.
Ye know how fondly my luxurious fancy
Doated upon my lord. For eighteen months
An embassy detain'd him from my bed.
A harbinger announced his near return.
Love dress'd his image to my longing thoughts,

In all its warmest colours—but the morn,
In which impatience grew almost to sickness,
Presented him a bloody corse before me.
I rav'd—the storm of disappointed passions
Assail'd my reason, fever'd all my blood—
Whether too warmly press'd, or too officious
To turn the torrent of my grief aside,
A damsel, that attended me, disclos'd
Thy suit, unhappy boy!

Edm. What is to come!
Shield me, ye gracious pow'rs, from my own thoughts!
My dreadful apprehensions!

Coun. Give it scope!
Thou canst not harbour a foreboding thought
More dire, than I conceiv'd, I executed.
Guilt rush'd into my soul—my fancy saw thee
Thy father's image—

Edm. Swallow th' accursed sound!
Nor dare to say—

Coun. Yes, thou polluted son!
Grief, disappointment, opportunity,
Rais'd such a tumult in my madding blood,
I took the damsel's place; and while thy arms
Twined, to thy thinking, round another's waist,
Hear, hell, and tremble!—thou didst clasp thy mother!

Edm. Oh! execrable! [ADELIZA *faints*.

Coun. Be that swoon eternal!
Nor let her know the rest—she is thy daughter,
Fruit of that monstrous night!

Edm. Infernal woman! [*Draws his dagger.*
My dagger must repay a tale like this.
Blood so distemper'd—no—I must not strike—
I dare not punish what you dar'd commit.

Coun. [*Seeing the dagger.*] Give me the steel—my arm will not recoil.
Thus, Edmund, I revenge thee! [*Stabs herself.*

Edm. Help! hoa! help!
For both I tremble, dare not succour either!

Coun. Peace! and conceal our shame—quick, frame some legend—
They come!

SCENE VII.

Countess, EDMUND, ADELIZA, FLORIAN, BENEDICT, *Attendants.*

Coun. Assist the maid—an accident—
[*They bear off* ADELIZA.
By my own hand—ha! Benedict!—but no!
I must not turn accuser.

Ben. Mercy! heaven!
Who did this deed?

Coun. Myself.

Ben. What was the cause?

Coun. Follow me to yon gulph, and thou wilt know.
I answer not to man.

Ben. Bethink thee, lady—

Coun. Thought ebbs apace—O Edmund, could a blessing
Part from my lips, and not become a curse,
I would—poor Adeliza—'tis accomplish'd!
[*Dies.*

Ben. My lord, explain these horrors. Wherefore fell
Your mother? and why faints your wife?

Edm. My wife?
Thou damning priest! I have no wife—thou know'st it—
Thou gavest me indeed—no—rot my tongue
Ere the dread sound escape it!—bear away
That hateful monk—

Ben. Who was the prophet now?
[*As he goes out, to* FLORIAN.
Remember me!

Edm. O Florian, we must haste
To where fell war assumes its ugliest form:
I burn to rush on death!

Flor. I dare not ask;
But stiffen'd with amazement I deplore—

Edm. O tender friend! I must not violate
Thy guiltless ear!—ha! 'tis my father calls!
I dare not see him! [*Wildly.*

Flor. Be compos'd, my lord,
We are all your friends—

Edm. Have I no kindred here?
They will confound all friendship! interweave
Such monstrous union—

Flor. Good my lord, resume
Your wonted reason. Let us in and comfort
Your gentle bride—

Edm. Forbid it, all ye pow'rs!
O Florian, bear her to the holy sisters.
Say 'twas my mother's will she take the veil,
I never must behold her!—never more
Review this theatre of monstrous guilt.
No; to th' embattled foe I will present
This hated form—and welcome be the sabre
That leaves no atom of it undefaced. [*Exeunt.*

COMUS.

A MASK, BY MILTON.

PROLOGUE,

AT A REVIVAL.

OUR stedfast Bard, to his own genius true,
Still bade his Muse * " fit audience find though few;"
Scorning the judgment of a trifling age,
To choicer spirits he bequeath'd his page.
He too was scorn'd, and, to Britannia's shame,
She scarce for half an age knew Milton's name:
But now, his fame by ev'ry trumpet blown,
We on his deathless trophies raise our own.
Nor art nor nature did his genius bound;
Heav'n, hell, earth, chaos, he survey'd around:
All things his eye, through wit's bright empire thrown,
Beheld, and made what it beheld his own.
Such Milton was: 'tis ours to bring him forth,
And yours to vindicate neglected worth.
Such heav'n-taught numbers should be more than read,
More wide the manna through the nation spread.
Like some bless'd spirit he to-night descends,
Mankind he visits, and their steps befriends;
Through mazy error's dark perplexing wood
Points out the path of true and real good,
Warns erring youth, and guards the spotless maid
From spell of magic vice, by reason's aid.
Attend the strains; and should some meaner phrase
Hang on the style and clog the nobler lays,
Excuse what we with trembling hand supply,
To give his beauties to the public eye:
His the pure essence, ours the grosser mean
Through which his spirit is in action seen.
Observe the force, observe the flame divine
That glows, breathes, acts, in each harmonious line.
Great objects only strike the gen'rous heart;
Praise the sublime, o'erlook the mortal part:
Be there your judgment, here your candour shewn;
Small is our portion—and we wish 'twere none.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
COMUS,	*Lady*,
First Spirit,	EUPHROSYNE,
Elder Brother,	BACCHANTES,
Younger Brother,	SABRINA, *and Pastoral Nymph.*
BACCHANALS.	

Bacchanals, Naiads, Spirits, &c.

* Paradise Lost, Book VII, ver. 37.

ACT I.

SCENE I—*Dicovers a wild Wood.*

The first Attendant Spirit enters.

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live inspher'd
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call earth, and with low-thoughted care
Confin'd and pester'd in this pinfold here
Strive to keep up a frail and fev'rish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there are that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of Eternity;
To such my errand is; and but for such
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould.
But whence yon slanting stream of purer light
Which streaks the midnight gloom, and hither darts
Its beamy point? Some messenger from Jove
Commission'd to direct or share my charge,
And, if I ken him right, a spirit pure
As treads the spangled pavement of the sky,
The gentle Philadel: but swift as thought
He comes——

The second Attendant Spirit descends.

Declare on what strange errand bent
Thou visitest this clime to me assign'd,
So far remote from thy appointed sphere.

2 *Spi.* On no appointed task thou seest me now;
But, as returning from Elysian bow'rs
Whither from mortal coil a soul I wafted,
Along this boundless sea of waving air
I steer'd my flight, betwixt the gloomy shade
Of these thick boughs thy radiant form I spy'd,
Gliding as streams the moon through dusky clouds;
Instant I stoop'd my wing, and downward sped
To learn thy errand, and with thine to join
My kindred aid, from mortals ne'er withheld
When virtue on the brink of peril stands.

1 *Spi.* Then mark th' occasion that demands it here.
Neptune, I need not tell, besides the sway
Of ev'ry salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to sev'ral government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
And wield their little tridents; but this isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue hair'd deities;
And all this track that fronts the falling sun
A noble peer of mickle trust and pow'r
Has in his charge, with temper'd awe to guide
An old and haughty nation proud in arms.

2 *Spi.* Does any danger threat his legal sway
From bold sedition or close-ambush'd treason?

1 *Spi.* No danger thence; but to his lofty seat,
Which borders on the verge of this wild vale,
His blooming offspring, nurs'd in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state
And new-entrusted sceptre, and their way
Lies through the perplex'd path of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wand'ring passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that by quick command from sov'reign Jove
I was dispatch'd for their defence and guard.

2 *Spi.* What peril can their innocence assail
Within these lonely and unpeopled shades?

1 *Spi.* Attend my words. No place but harbours danger;
In ev'ry region virtue finds a foe.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transform'd,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore as the winds listed
On Circe's island fell: (who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grov'ling swine?)
This nymph, that gaz'd upon his clust'ring locks,
With ivy berries wreath'd, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus nam'd.

2 *Spi.* Ill-omen'd birth to Virtue and her sons!

1 *Spi.* He, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And in thick shelter of black shades imbower'd
Excels his mother at her mighty art,
Off'ring to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass
To quench the drought of Phœbus; which as they taste,
(For most do taste through fond intemp'rate thirst)
Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance
Th' express resemblance of the gods, is chang'd
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
Or ounce or tiger, hog or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were:

Yet, when he walks his tempting rounds, the sorcerer
By magic power their human face restores
And outward beauty, to delude the sight.

2 *Spi.* Lose they the memory of their former state?

1 *Spi.* No, they (so perfect is their misery)
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before;
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.

2 *Spi.* Degrading fall! from such a dire distress
What pain too great our mortal charge to save?

1 *Spi.* For this, when any favour'd of high Jove
Chances to pass through this advent'rous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,
As now I do; and opportune thou com'st
To share an office which thy nature loves.
This be our task; but first I must put off
These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who with his soft pipe and smooth-ditty'd song
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. Veil'd in such disguise
Be it my care the sever'd youths to guide
To their distress'd and lonely sister; thine
To cheer her footsteps through the magic wood.
Whatever blessed spirit hovers near,
On errands bent to wand'ring mortal good,
If need require, him summon to thy side;
Unseen of mortal eye such thoughts inspire,
Such heaven-born confidence, as need demands
In hour of trial.

2 *Spi.* Swift as winged winds
To my glad charge I fly. [*Exit.*

1 *Spi.* ——I'll wait a while
To watch the sorcerer, for I hear the tread
Of hateful steps: I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters, with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of Men and Women dressed as Bacchanals; they come in, making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. [*Speaks.*] The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold,
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream;
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing tow'rd the other goal
Of his chamber in the east;
Mean-while welcome joy and feast.

SONG.

Now Phœbus sinketh in the west,
Welcome song and welcome jest,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity:
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.

Rigour now is gone to bed;
And Advice with scrup'lous head,
Strict age and sour Severity,
With their grave saws in slumber lie.

We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry choir,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wav'ring morrice move,
And on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.

SONG. *By a Woman.*

By dimpled brook and fountain brim
The Wood-nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep;
What has night to do with sleep?

Night has better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes and wakens love;
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only day-light that makes sin.

Comus. Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto! to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns. Mysterious dame!
That ne'er art call'd but when the dragon-womb
Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air,
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn, on th' Indian steep
From her cabin loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our conceal'd solemnity.

SONG. *By* COMUS *and Woman.*

From tyrant laws and customs free,
We follow sweet variety;
By turns we drink, and dance, and sing,
Love for ever on the wing.

Why should niggard rules control
Transports of the jovial soul?
No dull stinting hour we own,
Pleasure counts our time alone.

Comus. Come knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

A Dance.

Break off, break off; I feel the diff'rent pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure

(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains. I shall ere long
Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spungy air,
Of pow'r to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentiments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
I shall appear some harmless villager
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside
And hearken, if I may, her bus'ness here.

Enter the Lady.

Lady. This way the noise was if mine ear be true,
My best guide now: methought it was the sound
Of hot ill-manag'd merriment;
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath
To meet the rudeness and swill'd insolence
Of such late rioters; yet oh, where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?

Comus aside.] I'll ease her of that care, and be her guide.

Lady. My brothers, when they saw me weary'd out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favour of these pines,
Stepp'd, as they said, to the next thicket side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the grey-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weeds,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain;
But where they are, and why they come not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts: 'tis likeliest
They had engag'd their wand'ring steps too far.
This is the place as well as I may guess,
Whence, ev'n now, the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my list'ning ear,
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes and beck'ning shadows dire,
And airy tongues, that syllable mens' names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
O! welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hov'ring angel, girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity!
I see you visibly, and now believe,
That he, the supreme good (to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance)
Would send a glist'ring guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err; there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And cast a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture, for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy cell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the lovelorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well,
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?
Oh, if thou have
Hid them in some flow'ry cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet queen of parly, daughter of the Sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give surrounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.

Comus aside.] Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence:
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence through the empty vaulted night,
At ev'ry fall smoothing the raven down
Of Darkness till it smil'd! I have oft heard
My mother Circe, with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flow'ry-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause;
Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
And sweet in madness robb'd it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.—I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that, in rural shrine,
Dwell'st here with Pan or Silvan, by bless'd song
Forbidding ev'ry bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosp'rous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd! ill is lost that praise
That is address'd to unattending ears:
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my sever'd company,
Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.
Com. What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?
Lady. Dim darkness, and this leafy labyrinth.
Com. Could that divide you from near-ush'ring guides?
Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.
Com. By falsehood or discourtesy, or why?
Lady. To seek i' th' valley some cool friendly spring.
Com. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady!
Lady. They were but twain, and purpos'd quick return.
Com. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them?
Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
Com. Imports their loss beside the present need?
Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.
Com. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.
Com. Two such I saw what time the labour'd ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swink't hedger at his supper sat.
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots:
Their port was more than human: as they stood,
I took it for a fairy vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colours of the rainbow live,
And play i' th' plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
And as I pass'd I worshipp'd: if those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heav'n
To help you find them.
Lady. Gentle Villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Com. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lady. To find out that, good Shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well practis'd feet.
Com. I know each lane and ev'ry alley green,
Dingle or bushy dell, of this wide wood,
And ev'ry bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood;
And if your stray attendants be yet lodg'd,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatch'd pallat rouse: if otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till farther quest.
Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd,
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, bless'd Providence, and square my trial
To my proportion'd strength!—Shepherd, lead on. [*Exeunt.*

Enter COMUS' *Crew from behind the trees.*

SONG. *By a Man.*

Fly swiftly, ye minutes! till COMUS *receive*
The nameless soft transports that beauty can give;
The bowl's frolick joys let him teach her to prove,
And she in return yield the raptures of love.

Without love and wine, wit and beauty are vain,
All grandeur insipid, and riches a pain,
The most splendid palace grows dark as the grave:
Love and wine give, ye Gods, or take back what you gave.

CHORUS.

Away, away, away,
To Comus' court repair;
There night outshines the day,
There yields the melting fair.

ACT II.

Enter the Two BROTHERS.

E. Bro. Unmuffle, ye faint Stars! and thou, fair Moon!
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or if your influence be quite damm'd up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush candle, from the wicker-hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian cynosure.
Y. Bro. Or, if our eyes
Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of past'ral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innum'rous boughs.

But oh! that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears;
What if in wild amazement and affright?
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger or of savage heat?

E. Bro. Peace, brother; be not over exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown
What need a man forestal his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk; and Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
Where with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all so ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
He, that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' th' centre and enjoy bright day;
But he, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun,
Himself in his own dungeon.

Y. Bro. 'Tis most true
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the chearful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his grey hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night or loneliness it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.

E. Bro. I do not, brother,
Infer as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is
That I incline to hope rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength
Which you remember not.

Y. Bro. What hidden strength
Unless the strength of Heaven? if you mean that.

E. Bro. I mean that too; but yet a hidden strength,
Which if Heaven gave it, may be term'd her own;
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
She, that has that, is clad in complete steel,
And like a quiver'd nymph with arrows keen
May trace huge forests and unharbour'd heaths,
Infamous hills and sandy perilous wilds,
Where through the sacred rays of chastity
No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity;
Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblench'd majesty,
Be it not done in pride or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magick chains at curfew time,
No goblin, or swart fairy of the mine,
Hath hurtful pow'r o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste!
Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
The friv'lous bolt of Cupid: gods and men
Fear'd her stern frown, and she was Queen o' th' woods.
What was the snaky-headed gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin!
Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity
And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heav'n is saintly chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand livery'd angels lacquey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft converse with heav'nly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turn it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal.
But when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Embodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.

Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft' seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
Ling'ring and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
And link'd itself in carnal sensuality
To a degen'rate and degraded state.

Y. Bro. How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

E. Bro. ——— List, list! I hear
Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

Y. Bro. Methought so too: what should it be?

E. Bro. For certain
Either some one like us night-founder'd here,
Or else some neighbour woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

Y. Bro. Heav'n keep my sister! Again! again! and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

E. Bro. I'll halloo;
If he be friendly he comes well; if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

Enter the first Attendant Spirit, habited like a Shepherd.

Y. Bro. That halloo I should know—What are you? speak.
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.

F. Spi. What voice is that? my young lord? Speak again.

Y. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's shepherd sure.

E. Bro. Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft' delay'd
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweeten'd ev'ry musk-rose of the dale.
How cam'st thou here, good swain? has any ram
Slipp'd from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling weather the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?

F. Spi. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy!
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilf'ring wolf: not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But oh! my virgin lady! where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

E. Bro. To tell thee sadly, shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.

F. Spi. Ah me! unhappy! then my fears are true.

E. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis? pr'ythee briefly shew?

F. Spi. I'll tell ye: 'tis not vain nor fabulous,
(Though so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by th' heav'nly Muse,
Story'd of old, in high immortal verse,
Of dire chimeras, and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks, whose entrance leads to hell;
For such there be; but unbelief is blind.

E. Bro. Proceed, good shepherd; I am all attention.

F. Spi. Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur'd in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born—great Comus,
Deep skill'd in all his mother's witcheries,
And wanton as his father;
And here to ev'ry thirsty wanderer
By sly enticements gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage,
Character'd in the face. This have I learnt
Tending my flock hard by, i' th' hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade, whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tygers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscured haunts and inmost bow'rs.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,
And beauty's tempting semblance can put on,
T' inveigle and invite th' unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
But hark! the beaten timbrels jarring sound
And wild tumultuous mirth proclaim their presence:
Onward they move, and see! a blazing torch
Gleams through the shade, and this way guides their steps.
Let us withdraw a while, and watch their motions.
[*They retire.*

Enter COMUS's *Crew revelling, and by turns caressing each other, till they observe the Two Brothers; then the Elder Brother advances and speaks.*

E. Bro. What are you, speak, that thus in wanton riot
And midnight revelry, like drunken bacchanals,
Invade the silence of these lonely shades?

F. Wom. Ye godlike youths! whose radiant forms excel
The blooming grace of Maia's winged son,
Bless the propitious star that led you to us:
We are the happiest of the race of mortals,
Of freedom, mirth, and joy, the only heirs:
But you shall share them with us; for this cup,
This nectar'd cup, the sweet assurance gives
Of present and the pledge of future bliss.
[*She offers them the cup, which they both put by.*

SONG.—*By a Man.*

By the gayly circling glass
We can see how minutes pass,
By the hollow cask are told
How the waining night grows old.
Soon, too soon, the busy day
Drives us from our sport and play:
What have we with day to do?
Sons of Care, 'twas made for you.

E. Bro. Forbear, nor offer us the poison'd sweets

That thus have render'd thee thy sex's shame,
All sense of honour banish'd from thy breast.

SONG.

Fame's an echo, prattling double,
An empty, airy, glitt'ring bubble;
A breath can swell, a breath can sink it,
The wise not worth their keeping think it.
Why then, why such toil and pain
Fame's uncertain smiles to gain?
Like her sister Fortune blind,
To the best she's oft' unkind,
And the worst her favour find.

E. Bro. By her own sentence Virtue stands absolv'd,
Nor asks an echo from the tongues of men,
To tell what hourly to herself she proves.
Who wants his own no other praise enjoys;
His ear receives it as a fulsome tale,
To which his heart in secret gives the lie:
Nay, slander'd innocence must feel a peace,
An inward peace, which flatter'd guilt ne'er knew.

F. Wom. Oh! how unseemly shews in blooming youth
Such grey severity!—But come with us,
We to the bow'r of bliss will guide your steps;
There you shall taste the joys that Nature sheds
On the gay spring of life, youth's flow'ry prime;
From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve,
Each rising hour by rising pleasures mark'd.

SONG.—*By a Woman in a pastoral habit.*

Would you taste the noon-tide air,
To yon fragrant bow'r repair,
Where woven with the poplar bough
The mantling vine will shelter you.
Down each side a fountain flows,
Tinkling, murm'ring as it goes;
Lightly o'er the mossy ground,
Sultry Phœbus scorching round.
Round the languid herds and sheep
Stretch'd o'er sunny hillocks sleep,
While on the hyacinth and rose
The fair does all alone repose:—
All alone——and in her arms
Your breast may beat to love's alarms,
Till, bless'd and blessing, you shall own
The joys of love are joys alone.

E. Bro. How low sinks beauty when by vice debas'd!
How fair that form if virtue dwelt within!
But from this shameless advocate of shame
To me the warbled song harsh discord grates.

Y. Bro. Short is the course of ev'ry lawless pleasure;
Grief like a shade on all its footsteps waits,
Scarce visible in joy's meridian height,
But downward as its blaze declining speeds,
The dwarfish shadow to a giant spreads.

F. Wom. No more; these formal maxims misbecome you;
They only suit suspicious shrivell'd age.

SONG.—*By a Man and two Women.*

Live and love, enjoy the fair,
Banish sorrow, banish care;
Mind not what old dotards say;
Age has had his share of play,
But youth's sport begins to-day.
From the fruits of sweet delight
Let not scare-crow Virtue fright:
Here in Pleasure's vineyard we
Rove like birds from tree to tree,
Careless, airy, gay, and free.

E. Bro. How can your impious tongues profane the name
Of sacred Virtue, and yet promise pleasure
In lying songs of vanity and vice?
From virtue sever'd, pleasure phrenzy grows,
The gay delirium of the fev'rish mind,
And always flies at reason's cool return.

F. Wom. Perhaps it may; perhaps the sweetest joys
Of love itself from passion's folly spring;
But say, does wisdom greater bliss bestow?

E. Bro. Alike from love's and pleasure's path you stray,
In sensual folly blindly seeking both,
Your pleasure riot, lust your boasted love.
Capricious, wanton, bold, and brutal lust
Is meanly selfish, when resisted cruel,
And, like the blast of pestilential winds,
Taints the sweet bloom of Nature's fairest forms:
But love, like od'rous Zephyr's grateful breath,
Repays the flow'r that sweetness which it borrows:
Uninjuring, uninjur'd, lovers move
In their own sphere of happiness content,
By mutual truth avoiding mutual blame.
But we forget: who hears the voice of Truth
In noisy riot and intemp'rance drown'd?
Thyrsis, be then our guide; we'll follow thee,
And some good angel bear a shield before us!
[*Exeunt Brothers and Spirit.*

F. Wom. Come, come, my friends, and partners of my joys,
Leave to these pedant youths their bookish dreams;
Poor blinded boys, by their blind guides misled!
A beardless cynic is the shame of nature,
Beyond the cure of this inspiring cup,
And my contempt, at best my pity, moves.
Away, nor waste a moment more about 'em.

CHORUS.

Away, away, away,
To Comus's court repair,
There night outshines the day,
There yields the melting fair.
[*Exeunt singing.*

E. Bro. She's gone! may scorn pursue her wanton arts,
And all the painted charms that vice can wear.
Yet oft' o'er credulous youth such syrens triumph,
And lead their captive sense in chains as strong

As links of adamant. Let us be free,
And, to secure our freedom, virtuous.
Y. Bro. But should our helpless sister meet the rage
Of this insulting troop, what could she do?
What hope, what comfort, what support were left?
Spi. She meets not them; but yet, if right I guess,
A harder trial on her virtue waits.
E. Bro. Protect her Heav'n! But whence this sad conjecture?
Spi. This ev'ning late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the sav'ry herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopy'd, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapp'd in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill; but, ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And fill'd the air with barbarous dissonance,
At which I ceas'd, and listen'd them a while.
Y. Bro. What follow'd then? O! if our helpless sister—
Spi. Straight an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
That draw the litter of close curtain'd Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that ev'n Silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death---but oh! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honour'd lady, your dear sister.
Y. Bro. O my foreboding heart! too true my fears.
Spi. Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear,
And O! poor helpless nightingale, thought I,
How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by my ear, I found the place
Where the damn'd wizard, hid in sly disguise,
(For so by certain signs I knew,) had met
Already, ere my best speed to prevent,
The aidless, innocent lady, his wished prey,
Who gently ask'd if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbour villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight till I had found you here;
But farther know I not.
Y. Bro. O night and shades!
How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot
Against th' unarmed weakness of one virgin,
Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
E. Bro. Yes, and keep it still,
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm.
Virtue may be assailed but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force but not enthrall'd;
Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness; when at last,
Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change,
Self-fed and self-consum'd. If this fail,
The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on;
Against th' opposing will and arm of Heav'n
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Inde, I'll find him out,
And force him to restore his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Curs'd as his life.
Spi. Alas! good vent'rous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead;
Far other arms, and other weapons, must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.
E. Bro. Why, pr'ythee, shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
As to make this relation?
Spi. A shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skill'd
In every virtuous plant and healing herb,
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray,
Has shewn me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Among the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he cull'd me out,
And bade me keep it as of sovereign use
'Gainst all enchantment, mildew, blast, or damp,
Or ghastly fury's apparition.
I purs'd it up. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when you go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
And brandish'd blade rush on him, break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground;
But seize his wand; though he and his cursed crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

Scene opens, and discovers a magnificent Hall in COMUS'S *Palace, set off with all the gay decorations proper for an ancient banqueting-room.* COMUS *and Attendants stand on each side of the Lady, who is seated in an enchanted chair, and by her looks and gestures expresses great signs of uneasiness and melancholy.*

COMUS *speaks.*

Hence, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There, under ebon-shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclep'd Euphrosyné,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore.
Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter, holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty.

[*Whilst these lines are repeating, enter a Nymph representing* EUPHROSYNE, *or Mirth, who advances to the Lady, and sings the following song.*

SONG.

Come, come, bid adieu to fear,
Love and harmony live here;
No domestic jealous jars,
Buzzing slanders, wordy wars,
In my presence will appear;
Love and harmony reign here.

Sighs to amorous sighs returning,
Pulses beating, bosoms burning,
Bosoms with warm wishes panting,
Words to speak those wishes wanting,
Are the only tumults here,
All the woes you need to fear;
Love and harmony reign here.

Lady. How long must I, by magic fetters chain'd
To this detested seat, hear odious strains
Of shameless folly, which my soul abhors?

Com. Ye sedge-crown'd naiades, by twilight seen
Along Mæander's mazy border green,
At Comus's call appear in all your azure sheen.

[*He waves his wand, the Naiads enter, and range themselves in order to dance.*

Now softly slow let Lydian measures move,
And breathe the pleasing pangs of gentle love.

[*The Naiads dance a slow dance, expressive of the passion of love.*

[*After this dance the Pastoral Nymph advances slow, with a melancholy and desponding air, to the side of the stage, and repeats, by way of soliloquy, the first six lines, and then sings the ballad. In the mean time she is observed by* EUPHROSYNE, *who, by her gesture, expresses to the audience her different sentiments of the subject of her complaint, suitably to the character of their several songs.*

RECITATIVE.

How gentle was my Damon's air!
Like sunny beams his golden hair,
His voice was like the nightingale's,
More sweet his breath than flow'ry vales.
How hard such beauties to resign!
And yet that cruel task is mine!

A BALLAD.

On every hill, in every grove,
Along the margin of each stream,
Dear conscious scenes of former love,
I mourn, and Damon is my theme.
The hills, the groves, the streams remain,
But Damon there I seek in vain.

Now to the mossy cave I fly,
Where to my swain I oft have sung,
Well pleased the browsing goats to spy,
As o'er the airy steep they hung.
The mossy cave, the goats remain,
But Damon there I seek in vain.

Now through the winding vale I pass,
And sigh to see the well-known shade;
I weep, and kiss the bended grass,
Where love and Damon fondly play'd.
The vale, the shade, the grass remain,
But Damon there I seek in vain.

From hill, from dale, each charm is fled,
Groves, flocks, and fountains please no more;
Each flower in pity droops its head,
All nature does my loss deplore.
All, all reproach the faithless swain,
Yet Damon still I seek in vain.

RECITATIVE.—By EUPHROSYNE.

Love, the greatest bliss below,
How to taste few women know;
Fewer still the way have hit
How a fickle swain to quit.
Simple nymphs, then learn of me,
How to treat inconstancy.

BALLAD.

The wanton god that pierces hearts,
Dips in gall his pointed darts;
But the nymph disdains to pine,
Who bathes the wound with rosy wine.

Farewell lovers, when they're cloy'd;
If I am scorn'd, because enjoy'd,
Sure the squeamish fops are free
To rid me of dull company.

They have charms whilst mine can please;
I love them much, but more my ease;
Nor jealous fears my love molest,
Nor faithless vows shall break my rest.

Why should they e'er give me pain,
Who to give me joy disdain?
All I hope of mortal man,
Is to love me whilst he can.

COMUS *speaks.*

Cast thine eyes around, and see
How from ev'ry element
Nature's sweets are cull'd for thee,
And her choicest blessings sent.

Fire, water, earth, and air combine
To compose the rich repast;
Their aid the distant seasons join
To court thy smell, thy sight, thy taste.

Hither summer, autumn, spring,
Hither all your tributes bring:
All on bended knee be seen
Paying homage to your queen.

[*After this they put on their chaplets, and prepare for the feast. While* COMUS *is advancing with his cup, and one of his attendants offers a chaplet to the Lady, (which she throws on the ground with indignation,) the preparation for the feast is interrupted by lofty and solemn music from above, whence the second Attendant Spirit enters gradually in a splendid machine, repeating the following lines to the Lady, and sings, remaining still invisible to* COMUS *and his Crew.*

From the realms of peace above,
From the source of heavenly love,
From the starry throne of Jove,
Where tuneful Muses in a glitt'ring ring
To the celestial lyre's eternal string
Patient virtue's triumph sing,
To these dim labyrinths where mortals stray,
Maz'd in passion's pathless way,
To save thy purer breast from spot and blame
Thy guardian Spirit came.

SONG.

Nor on beds of fading flowers,
Shedding soon their gaudy pride;
Nor with swains in syren bowers,
Will true pleasure long reside.

On awful Virtue's hill sublime,
Enthroned sits th' immortal fair;
Who wins her height must patient climb,
The steps are peril, toil, and care.

So from the first did Jove ordain
Eternal bliss for transient pain.

[*Exit the Spirit, the music playing loud and solemn.*

Lady. Thanks, heav'nly songster! whosoe'er thou art,
Who deign'st to enter these unhallow'd walls,
To bring the song of virtue to mine ear!
O cease not, cease not the melodious strain,
Till my rapt soul high on the swelling note
To heav'n ascend—far from these horrid fiends!

Com. Mere airy dreams of air-bred people these,
Who look with envy on more happy man,
And would decry the joys they cannot taste.
Quit not the substance for a stalking shade
Of hollow virtue, which eludes the grasp.
Drink this, and you will scorn such idle tales.

[*He offers the cup, which she puts by, and attempts to rise.*

Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corp'ral rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heav'n sees good.

Com. Why are you vex'd, lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mix'd:
Not that nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such pow'r to stir up joy, as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.

Lady. Know, base deluder, that I will not taste it.
Keep thy detested gifts for such as these.

[*Points to his crew.*

SONG.—*By a Man.*

Mortals, learn your lives to measure
Not by length of time, but pleasure;
Soon your spring must have a fall;
Losing youth, is losing all:

Then you'll ask, but none will give,
And may linger, but not live.

Com. Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition,
By which all human frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain;
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? Hence with thy brew'd enchantments.
Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
With vizor'd falsehood and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With liqu'rish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treas'nous offer—None,
But such as are good men, can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-govern'd and wise appetite.

Com. O, foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Cov'ring the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste;
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hatch'd th'all-worship'd ore, and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should in a pet of temp'rance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
Th' All-giver would be unthank'd, would be unprais'd,
Not half his riches known, and yet despis'd,
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons;
Who would be quite surcharg'd with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlock'd my lips
In this unhallow'd air, but that this juggler
Wou'd think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules, prank'd in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.
If ev'ry just man, that now pines with want,
Had but a mod'rate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumber'd with her store;
And then the Giver wou'd be better thank'd,
His praise due paid. For swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted, base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough?

Com. Enough to shew
That you are cheated by the lying boasts
Of starving pedants, that affect a fame
From scorning pleasures, which they cannot reach.

EUPHROSYNE *sings.*

Preach not to me your musty rules,
Ye drones that mould in idle cell;
The heart is wiser than the schools,
The senses always reason well.

If short my span, I less can spare
To pass a single pleasure by;
An hour is long, if lost in care;
They only live, who life enjoy.

Com. These are the maxims of the truly wise,
Of such as practise what they preach to others.
Here are no hypocrites, no grave dissemblers;
Nor pining grief, nor eating cares approach us,
Nor sighs, nor murmurs—but of gentle love,
Whose woes delight: What must his pleasures then?

EUPHROSYNE *sings.*

Ye fawns and ye dryads, from hill, dale, and grove,
Trip, trip it along, conducted by Love;
Swiftly resort to Comus' gay court,
And in various measures shew Love's various sport.

Enter the Fawns and Dryads, and attend to the following directions. The tune is played a second time, to which they dance.

Now lighter and gayer, ye tinkling strings, sound;
Light, light in the air, ye nimble nymphs, bound.
Now, now with quick feet the ground beat, beat, beat;
Now, now, with quick feet the ground beat, beat, beat, &c.
Now cold and denying,
Now kind and complying,

Consenting, repenting,
Disdaining, complaining,
Indifference now feigning,
Again with quick feet the ground beat, beat, beat.
[*Exeunt Dancers.*

Com. List, lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name Virginity.
Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current, and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavoury in th' enjoyment of itself:
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,
It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.
Beauty is nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
It is for homely features to keep home;
They had their name thence: Coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to teaze the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advis'd: you are but young yet;
This will inform you soon.

Lady. To him that dares
Arm his prophane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what purpose?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit and gay rhetoric,
That has so well been taught her dazzling fence:
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd;
Yet should I try, the uncontrouled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

Com. She fables not: I feel that I do fear
Her words set off by some superior pow'r;
And though not mortal, yet a cold shudd'ring dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus,
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more,
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation;
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood;
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

[*The Brothers rush in with swords drawn, wrest the glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground; his rout make signs of resistance, but are all driven in.*

Enter the First Spirit.

What, have you let the false enchanter 'scape?
O, ye mistook; you should have snatch'd his wand,
And bound him fast: without his rod revers'd,
And backward mutters of dissev'ring pow'r,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless.
Yet stay, be not disturb'd; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have, which may be us'd,
Which once of Melibœus old I learn'd,
The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains:
I learn'd 'em then, when with my fellow-swain,
The youthful Lycidas, his flocks I fed.
There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,
That sways the Severn stream;
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invok'd in warbled song:
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself.
And see the swain himself in season comes.

Enter the Second Spirit.

Haste, Lycidas, and try thy tuneful strain,
Which from her bed the fair Sabrina calls.

SONG.—*By Second Spirit.*

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting,
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen, for dear honour's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake;
Listen and save.

SABRINA *rises and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue, and em'rald green,
That in the channel strays;
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread;
Gentle swain, at thy request,
I am here.

RECITATIVE.—Second Spirit.

Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distress'd,
Through the force, and through the wile,
Of unbless'd enchanter vile.

RECITATIVE.—Sabrina.

Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity.

Brightest lady, look on me;
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops, that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy ruby'd lip;
Next this marble venom'd seat,
Smear'd with gums of glut'nous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
Now the spell hath lost his hold!
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

[SABRINA *descends, and the Lady rises out of her seat; the Brothers embrace her tenderly.*

E. Bro. I oft have heard, but ne'er believ'd till now,
There are, who can by potent magic spells
Bend to their crooked purpose Nature's laws,
Blot the fair moon from her resplendent orb,
Bid whirling planets stop their destin'd course,
And through the yawning earth from Stygian gloom
Call up the meagre ghost to walks of light:
It may be so—for some mysterious end!

Y. Bro. Why did I doubt? Why tempt the wrath of Heav'n
To shed just vengeance on my weak distrust?
Here spotless innocence has found relief,
By means as wond'rous as her strange distress.

E. Bro. The freedom of the mind, you see, no charm,
No spell can reach; that righteous Jove forbids,
Lest man should call his frail divinity
The slave of evil, or the sport of chance.
Inform us, Thyrsis, if, for this thine aid,
We aught can pay that equals thy desert.

First Spirit, discovering himself.

Pay it to Heav'n! There my mansion is:
But when a mortal, favour'd of high Jove,
Chances to pass through yon advent'rous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heav'n to give him safe convoy.
That lent you grace to escape this cursed place;
To heav'n, that here has try'd your youth,
Your faith, your patience, and your truth,
And sent you through these hard essays
With a crown of deathless praise.

[*Then the two first Spirits advance, and speak alternately the following lines, which* MILTON *calls epiloguizing.*

To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus and his daughters three,
That sing about the golden tree.

Along the crisped shades and bow'rs
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The graces and the rosy-bosom'd hours
Thither all their bounties bring:
There eternal summer dwells,
And west winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.

Now my task is smoothly done,
I can fly or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free:
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

Chorus. *Taught by Virtue, you may climb*
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

[*Exeunt.*

EPILOGUE.

AT THE REVIVAL. SPOKEN BY EUPHROSYNE, WITH A WAND AND CUP.

SOME critic, or I'm much deceiv'd, will ask,
What means this wild, this allegoric masque?
Beyond all bounds of truth this author shoots;
Can wands or cups transform men into brutes?
'Tis idle stuff!—And yet I'll prove it true:
Attend; for sure I mean it not of you.
The mealy fop, that tastes my cup, may try
How quick the change from beau to butterfly;
But o'er the insect should the brute prevail,
He grins a monkey with a length of tail.
One stroke of this,* as sure as Cupid's arrow,
Turns the warm youth into a wanton sparrow;

* The wand.

Nay, the cold prude becomes a slave to love,
Feels a new warmth, and coos a billing dove:
The sly coquette, whose artful tears beguile
Unwary hearts, weeps, a false crocodile:
Dull, poring pedants, shock'd at truth's keen light,
Turn moles, and plunge again in friendly night:
Misers grow vultures, of rapacious mind,
Or more than vultures, they devour their kind:
Flatt'rers camelions, creeping on the ground,
With every changing colour changing round:
The party-fool, beneath his heavy load,
Drudges a driven ass through dirty road;
While guzzling sots, their spouses say, are hogs,
And snarling critics, authors swear, are dogs.
But to be grave, I hope we've prov'd at least,
All vice is folly, and makes man a beast.

THE

FAIR APOSTATE.

BY

WILLIAM MACDONALD.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

ALCANZOR, *Soldan of Sicily.*
BENASCAR, ASSAD, } *Saracen Chiefs.*
ZAGAN, *Soldan of Tunis.*
MANFRED, VALDEMAR, CORBRED, SICARDO, } *Norman Chiefs.*

WOMEN.

ZIMORNA, *Sister to Valdemar.*
TAMIRA, *Daughter to Manfred.*

Officers, Attendants, &c.

SCENE—*Sicily.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Norman Camp.*

Enter MANFRED, CORBRED, SICARDO.

Man. I will not loiter thus. Our swords grow rusty.
What boot those conferences, terms, and treaties,
But to consume the time?
Sic. Nay, more, my lord;
Each day we lose adds vigour to the foe.
Last night Messina's bay was white with sails
Of Moorish galleys; and their warlike freight,
Now on Victoria's top securely lodged,
Display their crescents to the rising sun.
If this had been foreseen——
Cor. And if it had,
My counsel had not varied. What are they?
Outcasts of wandering hordes, slaves of all hues,
Naked and nerveless; who will shrink and fly
Without a stroke, even from our trumpets' clangour,
And clashing of our arms. Assad and Zagan
In haste have raked them up on Afric's shores,
Proofs of their generous friendship to Alcanzor;
But he too well their weakness knows, to rest
His fortune on their prowess.
Man. Well I know
Thy valour, Corbred; else I should suspect
Thy keenness for this new-invented mode
Of waging war, by bargaining and treaty;
It looks so strange for Normans, sprung from heroes,
While victory smiles on our streaming banners,
And our fierce steeds impatient paw the ground,
To stand in arms, and barter provinces,
Like subtle merchants; try to over-reach,
Where we might conquer; and intrust our cause
To heralds' tongues, parchment, and lazy penmen!
Cor. Had we ne'er fought with loss, this confidence
In headstrong valour might become us well:
But in disgrace from these invaded shores
So lately driven, and by this same Alcanzor,
Our camp abandoned, and those lovely flowers,
The boast of Christendom, thy fair Tamira,
And Raimond's daughter, wretched captives left,

Where is the blame if we pursue with caution
The slippery path of conquest? If the sultan
Accept our terms, and yield us half the isle,
We gain possessions whence the infidel
Shall ne'er dislodge us. Lur'd by our success,
Our friends in troops shall leave the banks of Seine,
Their fleets shall darken all Sicilia's shores,
And all her valleys crowd with iron hosts,
Securing and extending our domain.

Man. If he refuse?

Cor. I cannot think he will—
Palermo lost, and all the fertile plains
From flaming Ætna westward to the sea;
His treasure ours, and he himself coop'd up
In Tauromina's bulwarks; so reduced,
He surely dare not farther urge his fate,
By obstinate defiance.

Sic. What he dares
We soon shall know. Lo, from the castle gate,
A Moorish chief advances. 'Tis Benascar,
A generous, though a formidable foe.
The prime account which in their state he bears,
For prudent councils, claims our best regard.

Enter BENASCAR.

Ben. Christians, once more, and but this once, I come
With words of peace in great Alcanzor's name.
Your insolent demands of territory
He scoffs and laughs at; scorns your false alliance,
And your vain threats indignant spurns away.
Already thundering on your haughty crests
His sabre you had felt, if not restrained
By the persuasive eyes of fair Zimorna,
And soft enchantment of her snowy arms.
She, our adored sultana, sadly mindful
Of your late general, her gallant brother,
And in her heart perhaps half Christian still,
Sends you these terms of safety. In three days
Abandon Sicily, fly to your ships,
Crowd all your sails, and carry home for booty
The spoils and treasures in Palermo won;
You may be needy—we can spare them well:
Take also, a far richer prize, our captive,
Lord Manfred's daughter; and may gracious Allah
Forgive your crimes, and favour your retreat!

Man. Is this the language of a conquer'd foe?
This the submission, Corbred, which you dreamed of?
Well—we have lost some time, and what remains
In words shall not be wasted. To your master
Return, Benascar. Tell him, with our swords
His mockery shall be answered.—Ho! my helmet!
Caparison the horses!—Fly, Sicardo,
And bid them sound to arms.—To arms, I say!
[*Exit.*

Cor. Obey the general, Sicardo.

Sic. What!
Can this be real?

Ben. Too certainly it is.
In his own prowess confident, Alcanzor
Prepares to lead the fight, and mutters strangely
About Palermo's loss, as if the devil
Had all our plot revealed. My trusty friends,
To-day I must affect the blustering warrior,
And deal sound blows; therefore avoid the wing
Where I command. Your strongest force oppose
To Zagan, that old prating African:
'Twould please me much to see him scouring off
With his fine barb.—Advance the standard there!
[*Speaking to his train without.*

Cor. Sicardo, linger not. Go call the trumpets,
For we must bustle too. [*Exit* SIC.] This foolish fellow
We'll trust no farther. He begins to totter
Upon ambition's ladder—talks of conscience—
Sees visions—and all night must have a monk
To sleep within his tent.—Your martial fit
Comes rather suddenly. I hardly thought
Your new sultana would have let her lord
So soon escape from love.

Ben. You know her not.
The spirit of her brother dwells within her.
With boundless passion she adores Alcanzor,
Yet even the very trifling of her fondness
Has something glorious. She will toss his spear
Around the hall; with plumes bedeck his helmet;
Play with his sword, or, like an Amazon,
Come with her quiver, bow, and buskined feet,
And at him smiling shoot a harmless arrow.
By Heav'n, I think, when slumbering on her breast,
His dreams must be of victory and triumph!

Cor. What didst thou hint, as if he had suspicion
Of our designs?

Ben. The time admits not now
Of free discourse, our matters to unfold.
I am expected back with utmost speed.
About an hour hence, ere we march our troops,
Among the ruins of the ancient temple,
Beneath the hill, we'll meet. Thou know'st the place.

Cor. I do, and will not fail thee.
[*Exit* BENASCAR.
Shallow fool!
That, knowing me false to my faith and friends,
Canst blindly think I will be true to thee!—
In the approaching fight, if fortune smile,
This racked and burning heart may find relief.
When loud alarm and danger rage around,
What ecstacy to force yon towers, and there
Revenge my love despised, satiate each craving,
And o'er this gull exult!—Sweet opportunity,
If thou appear'st, and I neglect to seize thee,
May each curst pang that tears me prove eternal!
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A Hall.*

Enter ALCANZOR, ZAGAN, ASSAD.

Alc. The Christians run to arms, and from the plain
Benascar waves his pennon high advanced,

The appointed signal of rejected peace.
Let all prepare for battle!—To my breast,
Zagan, once more in friendship let me strain thee.
Most generous prince! the warmth of thine affection
Had ne'er to me been known, but for those clouds
That lour upon my fortune. To disperse them
Thou comest; as when the sun, from out the main
Emerging, chases off the mists of night.
Thy speed, like his, outstrips the flight of thought.
I scarce believed Assad had reached thy court,
And told my adverse plight, when on the coast
The gallant fleet appeared.

Assad. My lord, he staid not
To hear my message out. Soon as he knew
That to solicit aid for thee I came,
He started up, and called his chiefs around,
Summoned their troops, quick to the harbour marched,
Filled every galley, and, ere morning rose,
We skimmed along the waves.

Zag. Shame on that friend
Who in the hour of danger can deliberate,
And sit at ease, debating with Dame Counsel,
While action frowns, and beckons him away!
Was it for me to lend a lazy ear
To his long dismal tales of battles lost,
And telling me the goodness of the quarrel?
Alcanzor, from thine infant days I've known thee,
And therefore know thy quarrel must be good.

Alc. The praise and fair esteem of men like thee
Are to my soul so grateful, that to lose them
Were worse than death; and therefore still I strive
To keep in honour's track, though it should lead me
Through ways perplexed, darksome and dangerous.
My boyish years were spent in peace profound;
And, as my youth advanced, I had no joy
But o'er these vales to see fair plenty smile,
And to the princes my allies to boast
My people's happiness. Some twelve months since,
In a large fleet, those wandering Normans came,
Adventurers from the shores of further Gaul,
Led by young Valdemar, whom Fame avouched
The first of Christian knights in proof of arms.
Benascar, who opposed them first, was routed,
With shameful loss: But, in a night alarm,
I broke their camp, and drove them to their ships,
While, by some hand unknown, their gallant leader
Fell, and was seen no more. His matchless sister,
Then my sad captive, now my happy queen,
With fair Tamira, daughter of Count Manfred,
My triumph graced.

Zag. By Mahomet, this welcome,
So warm and hearty, must have brought them back,
If broken limbs and bruises they delight in!

Alc. In number treble, they this year renew
Their unprovoked invasion: But old Manfred
Poorly supplies the place of Valdemar,
Who was himself an host. And yet, my friend,
Blushing I tell thee, they have driven my troops
As tygers drive poor trembling sheep before them.
Benascar's honesty and soldiership
I would not lightly question;—but Palermo,
So strongly garrisoned, so tamely yielded,
I cannot bear the thought:—with half his force,
I've held them here at bay.

Zag. Why, try him, try him.
Give him to-day some charge of little confidence,
But where a true man might do special service,
And if he's found a knave—here are dumb fellows,
And good tough bow-strings.

Alc. Justly thought, my lord.
It shall be so. I'll find some apt occasion,
Whate'er the fortune of the fight may be.
Now haste, advance your friends; here, on the steep,
We'll join our ranks, and rush upon those rovers.
Summon our captains, Assad, to the square.
Anon I'll meet thee.

Assad. Think it done, my lord. [*Exit.*

Zag. And think me here again, ere you can kiss
That smiling girl of Paradise advancing. [*Exit.*

Enter ZIMORNA.

Alc. Zimorna, my soul's empress, now no more
Will fate allow the day to love and thee.
Those insolent and lawless men refuse
Our friendly terms; the pleadings of mild peace
Reach not their ears, and therefore we must try
Amid the clamours of rough war to move them.
To-day I draw my sabre, unrestrained
By pity's touch; and every stroke shall fall
With all the force that hope of fame and glory,
Or dread of foul defeat, can give this arm.
Thou hast no friend among them, for whose safety
Thy partial wish might bid me pause?

Zim. O none!
The foes of justice and humanity
Can never be my friends. The Christian name
They bear but to profane it.

Alc. Nobly said!

Zim. And yet, my lord, if my dear brother lived,
Perhaps I should not dare to talk thus nobly.
Strong nature will be heard; and hence I see
With more regret the terrors of Tamira.
What if her father in the battle fall?
And by thy hand?—How shall I meet the mourner?
How comfort her, while in her grief's distraction
She curses thee?—'Tis terrible!—O think
Of some prevention!—Ere the battle joins,
Might you not send her to the Christian camp,
That when they fly before thee, as they must,
Among them she may 'scape to Gaul again,
And in some sacred solitude conceal
Her grief incurable?—'Tis all she wishes.

Alc. That may not be; she is Benascar's captive.

Zim. And him she fears and hates.
Alc. If her escape
Could be unknown to me—
Zim. Enough, my lord,
Indulgent still to thy Zimorna's wishes!
Thou set'st my heart at ease. I have no fear
For thy dear life: I think of nought but triumph.
[*Trumpets.*
Alc. Hark—'tis the Arabian horse.—A short adieu.— [*Embracing.*
Ascend the western tower, my love; from thence
Thou may'st behold the field.—One more embrace.—
Farewell—we soon shall meet in joy again.
[*Exit.*
Zim. Go—and the God of battles be thy guard!
Now shall the gentle offices of friendship
Shorten the anxious hours till he return.
Hither she slowly wanders. Hapless maid,
Untimely 'reft of her affection's idol!
O could I charm to peace her woe-worn heart,
The spirit of my brother, now in Heav'n,
Would thank me for the enhancement of his bliss.

Enter TAMIRA.

Why, dear Tamira, this unceasing sorrow?
Can nothing bring thee comfort? Must thy youth
Fade like a blighted flow'r, which one sharp blast
Has struck so sore, that neither cooling showers
Nor cheering sunshine can its bloom restore?
My brother's fall untimely well deserved
Our tears, and we have paid them: 'Twas a duty
By love demanded; but its obligation
Is not eternal. Other cares arise,
To claim attention from the active mind,
And rouse it from the lethargy of grief.
Tam. Never, Zimorna. Under the wide sky
There's nought to claim my care. My heart is dead:
The world to me is desert.
Zim. Has it then
No friend to love, no father yet to bless thee?
Tam. Both—and most worthy of my soul's affection:
But even they, so wayward is my fate,
Instead of soothing, but increase my sorrow.
Zim. What have I done, Tamira, so to grieve thee?
Tam. Hast thou not, in the enchantment of thy love,
Forgot thy friends, thy country, and thy God?
The virtues of thy lord compel esteem,
Yet would we ne'er had seen him!—Goes he not
This moment forth to battle, all thy wishes,
Thy sighs, thy prayers for victory following him?
And goes he not to lift his angry sword
Against my father?—O forlorn old man!
He has no hero now to fight beside him,
With arms invincible! no daughter now
To bathe his wounds, to wash the dust and blood
From his grey hairs!—Protect him, holy Virgin,
And pity me!
Zim. Couldst thou, with less distraction,
Within Lord Manfred's tent await the issue
Of this impending fight?
Tam. Thou knowest I could:
Thou knowest I have on earth no other wish,
But there to fly, till to a Christian land
Once more conveyed, I find some holy cell,
And waste my life in prayers and penitence.
Zim. Then take thy wish. Behind the arras here,
There is a secret way, contrived of old,
When the famed Grecians flourished in this isle;
Far winding down the woody hill it leads,
And in a ruined temple's deep recess,
Among thick bushes ends. The Christian camp
Is not far distant.
Tam. Heaven for ever bless thee!
Quick let me take my country's dress again.
O my dear father—yet once more I'll see him!
Zim. And when thou dost, Tamira, talk not lightly
Of her who gives thee freedom. Do not paint me
A wavering wanton, lured from faith and duty
By my Alcanzor's form and princely state.
Tell them that, with the godlike youth's permission,
My heart is Christian still: The outward shew
I hold of small account. By love instructed,
Far nobler views my soul has learned to take
Of truth and nature, than our tattling nurses
And the poor monks of Normandy could give.
Tam. Zimorna, thou wast born still to excel me.
Thou like the eagle on some awful rock,
Sublime among the clouds, thine eyrie hang'st,
From thence to soar around, with equal wing,
Through winter's storms and summer's burning blaze:
I, a sad turtle, widowed, weak, and dying,
To the deep valley bend my feeble flight,
There in the wild woods sing my notes of woe,
Till from the spray I drop to sleep for ever.
[*Exeunt,*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Portico of a ruinous Temple.*

Enter VALDEMAR—*the mask of his helmet down.*

Val. What are my life restored, my health regained,
Freedom and force recovered? Useless all.
Here leaning on my idle sword I stand,
In the dull torpor of uncertainty,
While thousands round me arm for glorious fight.
I thought, in sullen and indignant mood,
To spurn the Norman name, and join Alcanzor,

Till this distracting rumour struck mine ear
Of the fair Christian captive made his queen;
Tamira, doubtless. For my happy rival,
I like a dotard should have spent my blood.
Yet—'tis beyond belief!—So soon forgotten,
By one so dear—O woman!—Why, by Heav'n,
A whimpering widow would have longer worn
The hypocritic badges of feigned sorrow!
Yet she whom my poor doating heart had shrined,
The spotless pattern of unchanging truth,
Thus to fall off, ere yet the grass was green
Upon her lover's grave—O false Tamira!

Enter TAMIRA, *from the Temple.*

Tam. Methought I heard my name—protect me Heaven!
This place is guarded. [*Retreating.*
Val. Lady, do not fly.—
'Tis she. O happy chance! A moment now
Reveals my doom.
[*Goes in, and returns with her.*
Fear nothing—sure the earth
Contains no savage that could offer wrong
To fair Tamira.
Tam. Who art thou, placed here
To bar my way?
Val. A wanderer unknown,
Whose sole possessions are a trusty sword
And fearless heart.
Tam. What dost thou purpose? Why
Address thyself to me?
Val. For one request,
Which thou, fair princess, even to a stranger
Mayest grant securely. If there be a man
In either host, Norman or Saracen,
Whose life to thee is dear, that happy man
Give me to know. This is my only wish.
Hard by him I will tread the bloody field,
Happy, if I can swell thy hero's triumph,
If I can ward a javelin from his breast,
Receive the stroke of death for him designed,
And falling think I spare Tamira's tears.
Tam. Stranger, whoe'er thou art, thy soul is noble.
This battle to the victor glory brings,
And dazzling conquest—bitter grief to me.
Friends of my heart on either side contend:
Yet duty, faith, and nature's powerful voice,
Compel my vows the Christians' part to take.
My father leads them; him if thou canst serve,
Thou hast my prayers.
Val. No other but thy father?
Tam. None, none. Another once indeed there was,
But he——
Val. What was he?
Tam. One who needed not
Thine aid; one who ne'er fought but triumph crowned him;
One on whose arm the fate of battle hung;
One who had learned to smile at awful war;—
But ah! my hero, now thou war'st no more,
In peace eternal thou art safely laid—
O Valdemar!
Val. Lady, these precious tears
Are vain: that Valdemar yet lives.
Tam. Lives!—How?
Where? O assure me—swear it—make me certain
That I'm in Heaven!
Val. Then by that heaven thou namest,
By every saint and sacred power there dwelling,
I saw him three days since on Afric's shore!
Tam. What shall I give thee, gallant, gallant stranger,
Angel of bliss to my despairing heart?
Here, take my scarf—I'll bind it on thy helmet—
But yet, O do not mock me—sure he could not
Linger on Afric's shore, and leave me here
A wretched captive. No, he would have flown,
I know he would, through waves, and storms, and foes,
To my deliverance.
Val. Sweetly, truly spoken, [*Lifting his visor.*
Like my adored Tamira, my soul's queen!
Tam. Tis he! all-gracious Heaven! my Valdemar!
How shall I bear this flood of ecstacy!
Val. Here in my arms—O gently let me fold thee,
Compose the tremblings of thy tender breast,
And hear the music of thy melting tongue.
To the demands of eager love replying,
Relate how thou hast fared.
Tam. O Valdemar,
Brief is the history of hopeless woe.
I think I've slept a long and gloomy night,
Little expecting such a glorious morning.
Thou livest—I see thee—O distracting joy!
What wretch could falsely say my hero fell
In the night-battle?
Val. No, 'twas truly said;
I fell by a base traitor's coward hands.
That night when brave Alcanzor forced our camp,
As I was mounting hastily my horse,
Corbred behind me came, and struck me down:
I turned and knew the villain, but my senses
Instant forsook me. When I waked again,
I found a dagger stuck across my cuirass,
Directed at my heart, as plainly seemed,
But by my guardian angel turned awry.
'Twas then deep night: Around me nought appeared
But dead and dying men, and empty tents.
Wandering down slowly to the shore, I found
A galley anchored, and her crew employed
Most busily in plundering. Me they seized,
Unable to resist——
[*Trumpet sounds at a distance.*
Those warlike sounds,
Sweet music to my soul, forbid at large
To tell thee how to Africa I past;
What chequered fortune there I since have borne;
And how at last, escaped in Zagan's fleet,
I here in arms appear—and go to win

Smiles from Tamira, for her father saved.
Tam. Wilt thou reveal thyself to him?
Val. I will,
To him alone. But when the battle's done,
Both friends and foes shall know me.
Tam. Then, farewell,
And all good powers protect thee!
Val. Whither goest thou?
Tam. Back to the castle, whence but now I came.
Here is a secret and secure retreat.
To reach the Christian camp my purpose was,
Flying the presence of my happy friends,
My selfish sorrow to indulge alone:
But now I must return exultingly,
To tell—O Heaven—to boast my altered state.
Val. Thy happy friends?—and in Alcanzor's court?
What means Tamira?—Who?
Tam. Hast thou not heard
Thy sister's change?
Val. Change! Heaven and earth, what change?
[*Trumpets.*
The trumpet calls again—I cannot hear,
And hardly wish to hear thy fatal meaning,
Lest it unnerve my arm. Retire, my fair.
If she is ought to thee but kind and generous,
She must, indeed, beyond all thought, be changed.
Farewell!—To find Lord Manfred I must fly.
If in the battle we do not prevail,
Here will I watch at night: Thou sure wilt come;
And if Zimorna be my sister still,
Let her attend my love. Farewell!
Tam. Farewell! [*Exeunt diversely.*

Enter BENASCAR *and* CORBRED.

Ben. Knowest thou that haughty figure that now crossed us?
Cor. Some partizan of ours I guess, but know not
His name nor state. Fellows abound with us,
Rovers by nature, who delight in toil
And hardy enterprise.
Ben. Such was your general,
Upon whose fall we built our plan of fortune.
But, couldst thou think—some of these Africans
Have brought a rumour that he 'scaped alive?
Cor. They lie like villains. With my battle-axe
I smote him to the earth; and through his heart
Sicardo drove a dagger. Would the rest,
That stand between us and our golden hopes,
Were as secure!
Ben. If thou can'st find the means
To linger out this fight till evening fall,
Alcanzor for the last time sees the sun.
I have prepared some arrows, and their points
Imbued in venom so unconquerable,
That if the skin they break a single hair's breadth,
Med'cine is vain, and speedy death most certain.
Those in the dusk might be directed well.
Cor. Be thou as certain of thine archery
As I fit opportunity to find thee.
Were he asleep, we need no more disguise
Our daring purposes. This dotard Manfred
Is in my power. We'll straight divide the isle;
Seize on the beauteous dames for whom we burn;
And of our princedoms fix the splendid seats,
You in Palermo, I in Syracuse.
Not that in sooth I love the Fair Apostate
As thou doat'st on Tamira; but I know
She hated me; and in Alcanzor's arms
Exulting now she boasts her preference;
For which most sweet revenge I meditate.
[*Trumpet.*
These are your trumpets?
Ben. Yes; and lo, Sicardo
To call thee comes. Remember, while the sun
Keeps in the sky, we must keep in the field.
Cor. O fear not. We shall have good generalship.
We'll march and traverse skilfully around:
Close fight's too barbarous.
Ben. Attend us fortune! [*Exit.*

Enter SICARDO.

Sic. The lines are formed, and Manfred, all impatient,
Bids sound the charge. How hast thou managed now
This infidel?
Cor. As heretofore—deceived him;
Made him still hope Tamira shall be his,
Whom even this hour I mean to make my own.
Sic. Heavens! how?—with violence?
Cor. Ay—doubt'st thou that?
Think'st thou a little struggling would appal me?
Sic. O heart of iron!—What, fear'st thou not hell,
Nor hop'st for heaven?
Cor. Beyond the bitter pangs
Of passion unappeased, I fear no hell,
Nor hope for heaven, but in Tamira's arms.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter TAMIRA, *from the Temple.*

Tam. There's no return. The hall resounds with shouts—
Benascar's troop, perhaps, in search of me—
Heaven! Heaven, where shall I lurk from violence?
Even countrymen and Christians now I dread;
For in an hour like this the gentlest nature
Is changed by fierce alarm and sounds of horror,
To something savage. War, detested monster,
Murderer of joy, and mother of despair,
Shall thy pestif'rous breath ne'er cease to taint
Each noble disposition? Every youth,
Formed to inspire affection, and to feel it,
Infected by this frenzy, flies to arms,
And by defeat or victory alike
Destroys what most he loves, the virgin's smile;
Causes what most he hates, the widow's woe.
[*Alarms.*
Hark—horrid tumult—what if now Alcanzor
And Valdemar in dreadful strife are met?

The first of human kind, and brothers—brothers
Opposed in mortal conflict!—O Zimorna,
Whate'er the event, distraction is thy fate,
Even worse than mine.—Ha! warriors come—
How shall I hide?—All holy powers protect me!
[*Exit.*

Enter CORBRED *and* SICARDO.

Cor. Confusion! They disdain restraint. The battle
Will instantly be won. Know'st thou yon knight
Who leads our van so rapidly along?
Curse on his valour!—He has gained the height,
And intercepts my way.—Ha!—sure I saw
A female form glancing athwart that ruin—
Who can it be?—Abide thou here, Sicardo.—
[*Exit, and returns with* TAMIRA.
Call off our men, Sicardo. Bid thy trumpets
Sound a retreat.

Sic. Why a retreat?
Our glory in full flight?

Cor. Here is our glory, fool,
Our triumph's dazzling queen; whom to secure
Behoves us more than to fatigue our swords,
In hewing down some hundred flying slaves.
Go! [*Exit* SICARDO.] Charming princess, now the fate of war
Becomes indifferent. Possessed of thee,
For whom my sword was drawn, the baser motives
Of fame and fortune are not worth a stroke.
[*Sheathing his sword.*
But why that frown?—Can freedom give thee pain?

Tam. Am I then free?

Cor. Thou art, and I thy slave.

Tam. Then bring me to my father.

Cor. Soft, my princess.
Fain would I know by what most happy chance
I found thee here, in this abandoned ruin
Lurking alone. How couldst thou venture forth?

Tam. Not to seek thee, be sure. Where is my father?

Cor. Why, well employed, as a good father ought,
His children's wealth achieving, winning crowns
For us to wear.

Tam. For us!—for thee!—what mean'st thou?

Cor. Thou loveliest form by Nature ever made,
O let me tell, thus bending to thy beauties,
To what high hopes, to what transcendant bliss,
Lord Manfred's favour bid me dare to rise!
Soon as the death of Valdemar was told—
Nay turn not from me—

Tam. Who could tell his death,
But thou, detested slave, whose deed it was?

Cor. And who could tell thee that the deed was mine?

Tam. Himself.—Now tremble, villain.—Yes, himself!
Escaped in safety from thy coward strokes,
In yonder battle now my hero fights,
Lovely and brave as when at first he charmed me!

Cor. [*Aside.*] If this be true—curst fortune!—Yes, it must.
From him alone the tale could come—damnation!
Where can I turn?—What, baffled—sunk for ever?
No—by the furies, yet this moment's mine,
And this warm wanton, glowing for my foe!
O glorious thought!—Amid the clash of arms
He pants and toils—while here secure I riot
In ecstacies—and then—why leave her safe—
It cannot move surprise to find the dead
Upon the field of battle.
Come, fair lady,
This temple, in its better days, belonged
To Venus, and the rites of love were paid
With cost and pomp; but now its ruined state
Demands less ceremony. [*Shouts.*

Tam. Traitor—monster— [*Struggling.*
Unhand me—let me pass.

Enter SICARDO.

Sic. Away! away!
The field is lost, the Saracen triumphant,
Our broken troops o'erwhelmed in rout and ruin,
The vanguard knight by fierce Alcanzor taken,
And Manfred hardly 'scaped. Avenging Heaven
Pursues our crimes, and will no longer bear
Our endless treasons.

Cor. Peace! priest-ridden fool!
Saw'st thou Benascar?

Sic. Yes, and hitherward
He comes, with other leaders of their side.

Cor. Then mark my words, and as thou lov'st thy life,
See that they be obeyed:—Within these walls
With this fair dame retire, and guard her sure.
My troops I soon will rally and relieve thee.
If she attempt escape, or give alarm,
Thy sword is drawn, let that secure her silence.
Living or dead let me behold her here
At my return, or woe upon thy soul! [*Exit.*

Sic. Lady, we must retire. From me fear nothing
Beyond strict vigilance. The conquerors come.
[*They retire into the ruin.*

Enter ALCANZOR, ZAGAN, ASSAD, BENASCAR, *Officers and Soldiers.*

Alc. Suspend your warlike toil, my gallant friends:
Our work is done: Our fame to endless ages
One moment's glorious effort has secured.
Success so unexpected and unequalled,
Speaks the protecting care of righteous Allah,
And of our holy prophet. May those Christians
Observe and own the wrathful hand of Heaven
Against them set!

Zag. Good arguments, my lord,
To prove that doctrine in our hands we bear,
Which now press'd home will scarce be controverted.

Assad. So wildly scattered o'er the plain they run,
That if we follow, few will reach the shore:

My lord, we must improve our victory.
Alc. No victory that Heaven vouchsafes to me
By such improvement e'er shall be abused.
Let those who of their cause, their friends, their valour,
Are diffident, o'er beaten foes exult,
And do the work of butchers; but let us,
Secure of all, though in the gloom of battle
Unfeeling rage may for a time possess us,
Instant recover our humanity,
When triumph dawns! Let victory and mercy
Still hand in hand come flying where we fight,
And with their mutual wreaths our brows adorn!
Yet, that the foe may not suspect our caution,
A chosen band do thou, Benascar, take,
And hang upon their rear, till on the sea
Their fleet secure them.
Ben. On this pleasing duty
Ardent I go, and quickly shall return
With joyful tidings to my royal lord——
Or terror and confusion on his head.
[*Aside, and exit.*

Alc. Now to the fortress march, where palmy triumph
Courts our approach; where old men on the walls,
With tears of fondness wetting their grey beards,
Impatient wait to bless their valiant sons;
Where, fluttering yet 'twixt joy and fear, the virgin
Shall her exulting lover softly clasp,
And from his brows wipe off the stains of battle;
Where from the rage and havoc of grim war,
Now quelled, each peaceful charm and social joy
Shall higher relish take.—The shower of May,
All unexpected, thus comes gliding on,
Blackens the sky, and chills the gale of spring;
But passing soon, lo, in its sunny rear,
The woods with fresher verdure glow; the meads,
With all their flowers, in brighter radiance smile;
And from her shade bounds the gay shepherdess,
With frolic feet to dash the genial dew.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Hall.*

Enter ALCANZOR, ZAGAN, ASSAD, *Officers passing;* VALDEMAR *chained, and other Prisoners.*

Alc. Welcome, my lords; brave fellow-soldiers, welcome!
This proof of valour happily o'erpast,
More confident we tread these halls, and move
With lighter step to meet each happy friend
That smiles on our return. Zagan, to thee
The prisoners we intrust; a kinder keeper
They could not chuse; see them bestowed securely,
All but this man, [*To* VALDEMAR,] who seems no common prize,
And whom myself shall guard. Assad, the gates
And watch-tow'rs are thy charge: Have trusty centinels,
And let them mark what course Benascar takes.
[*Exeunt* ZAGAN, ASSAD, *&c.*
Now tell me, valiant Christian, what art thou?
Val. Thy prisoner.
Alc. Had I not thought thee more,
From out the ranks that yonder drag their chains,
I had not called thee single.
Val. That distinction
They cannot envy, nor can I esteem.
Alc. Amazed, I saw thy bravery in the battle;
Admired thee, while my chosen ranks, disordered,
Thy force avoided; yea, ev'n while thy strokes
I felt upon my crest.
Val. A nation's quarrel,
By private wrongs enhanced, sat on my sword.
If, by those mighty motives fired, I've done
More fatal execution than my fellows,
Thou hast me in thy power. A heavier chain,
A deeper dungeon, or what else revenge,
In cruel wantonness, invents, I scorn.
Alc. Christian, thou know'st me not. While in the fight
We strove together, was it not a chance,
Uncertain as the shifting of a breeze,
Who should be victor? Had I fallen thy captive,
Lo, the revenge which from a noble foe
I had expected. [*Unbinds him.*] Go in peace and safety;
Return, and tell thy friends I thus embraced thee,
And wished thou wert mine enemy no more.
Val. Thine enemy! O sacred saints and angels,
Whence had the infidel such nobleness?
Speech has no power for this: I cannot thank him.
[*Aside.*
My lord, you have undone me. Hardest slavery,
Contempt, and cruelty, I could have borne,
But this insulting generosity,
From thee, the foe of Christians and their God—
Alc. Why shouldst thou think me so?—Which of your shores
Have I invaded?—Or with plundering bands
Which of your countries have I overrun?
Your cities sacked? or sacred fanes insulted?
In my most prosperous state, your trading galleys
Coasted this island safe, or in its bays
Found hospitable harbour. No sad wretch
E'er pin'd beneath the yoke of bondage here.
Of all the captives which my troops have taken,
Since first thy countrymen like robbers came,
Two only are detained, and one of those
Now rules mine empire.
Val. How—thine empire rules?
My fears were true.—O ruin!

Alc. There—behold her;
She comes, the loveliest form, and noblest soul,
That e'er adored thy prophet. She will tell thee
If I'm the foe of Christians and their God.

Enter ZIMORNA.

Zim. My lord, as by the western gate I past,
Benascar's trumpets———Ha!—what—who is this?
Alc. Thy countryman, Zimorna—and a brave one.
Zim. Speak—livest thou?—art thou he?—art thou indeed?
Yes—'tis himself—my lost, my ever-loved—
My brother— [*Embracing him.*
—Why this coldness? Why that look
Inflexible and stern? We were not wont
After much shorter absence so to meet.
Val. Not so, indeed. But chance and change prevail,
And govern all. Witness these regal robes
That deck the sister of poor Valdemar:
Witness that circlet sparkling on the brow
Of Raimond's daughter.—Go—I know thee not!
Zim. Fie, Valdemar! prove not thy Christian spirit,
By spurning courtesy and kind affection.
My lord, [*To* ALCANZOR,] I would have told you that the trumpets
Proclaim Benascar near; and from the walls
Our centinels descry the Normans yet
Rallied before their camp.
Alc. This calls attention,
And I must go. Zimorna, tell thy brother,
I have embraced him as a generous foe,
And long to do it as a faithful friend.
I little knew the value of my prize:
I little fancied that the very heart
And spirit of the war was in my power,
When I declared him free. But though released
From that compulsive and material chain,
Thou may'st, I trust, more strongly fetter him
In sympathy's soft bands. To thee I leave him.
[*Exit.*
Zim. What, still averse and sullen?—Nay, my brother,
This I have not deserved.
Val. Your pardon, madam,
If in respect and homage due I fail.
What art thou here? What is thy rank, fair dame?
The play-thing of the day? the fav'rite nymph?
Chief lady of the haram?—O thou wretch,
'Tis well I have no weapon!
Zim. Such rude outrage,
Even though I were the wretch thou dar'st to think me,
Were scarce becoming from a Christian knight.
But how wilt thou forgive thyself, when told
That she thy zeal unmannered so insults
Is wife—yes, sole, unrivalled, happy wife
To him who conquered thee. A different fate,
O Heavens, how different, from the black alliance
Designed by thee!
Val. As yet thou canst not tell.
Corbred is powerful, and for aught thou know'st,
Noble and virtuous: he is Christian too.
Espoused by him, thy worldly state had been
Most honourable, and thy soul in safety;
While here thy life is but a painted pageant,
And thine eternal being cast away.
Zim. What is it to be Christian? To be cruel?
In blood and desolation to delight?
To spurn all laws? To hate mankind? To have
No sigh for woe; for misery no tear?
If so, then Corbred is the first of Christians.
Or is it to be generous and gentle?
Honour to cherish? Justice to protect?
To have a heart expanded as the air,
And warm as the bright sun?—Then my Alcanzor,
Even among sainted martyrs might appear,
And claim protection of the sacred cross.
Val. Thou know'st he cannot; impious as thou art,
Thou know'st that every holy power must hate him,
And all his sect accursed.
Zim. This is the jargon
Of hood-winked prejudice. O fatal error!
And fatal blindness to the light which heaven
Profusely sheds! Look but around the world,
From those bleak regions where the fur-clad Dane
His revels on the warped waters keeps,
To the gay fields where gales perfumed, and flowers
Of endless bloom, delight the Arabian maid;
Observe what varied prayers to Heaven arise,
Thankful or supplicant, yet in success
Alike; for to them all the goods of nature
Are with a balance most impartial dealt.
Mark even this little isle. Few ages since,
Here was no fountain, river, hill, or grove,
Without its tutelary power, in strains
Immortal by Sicilian muses sung.
The Christian law, resplendent as the sun,
Those shadows banished to eternal night;
That, in its turn, obscure and feeble grown,
Has yielded to the eastern prophet's visions.
Yet still our Enna bloomed from year to year,
Still our Hyblean bees their sweets amassed,
Ætna still thundered, Arethusa flowed,
The sun shone bright, and good men went to Heaven.
Val. O argument profane! which, even if true,
Touches not thee. The man of honest bravery,
Who for his country unsuspicious fights,
Whate'er that country be, is honourable;
But the deserter, the base renegado,
For ever stands detested. What! forsake
The sacred faith our noble father held!
By Heaven, I would as soon forsake my standard,
When the full tide of battle beats against it,
And, like a recreant, fly to join the foe!
Zim. So thinks Alcanzor, therefore is not Christian;
And therefore where he reigns the meanest slave
Feels not the bloody rod of bigotry,
But stands accountable to Heaven alone

For heavenly rites; and therefore I, unblamed,
Still near my heart this sacred emblem wear.
[*Shewing a cross, and kissing it.*
Val. Dost thou?—O then thou art my sister still! [*Embracing.*
But ah! Zimorna, think—think of our cause,
The cause of Christendom!—Hither we came,
Against those infidels, by vows combined,
Our arms with mystic ceremonies bless'd,
Our banners for the warfare consecrated
With holy pomp——
Zim. With idle pageantry,
As well the event has proved. Am not I queen
Of Sicily, and thou my captive made,
Spite of thy native force and hallow'd arms?
And in this hall, I swear, thou shalt remain,
Till every Norman of them leave the isle!
Without thee they are nothing. O, my brother,
How I exult to have thee thus secure,
Where thou may'st know my lov'd Alcanzor! Nature
Sure meant you brothers, though far distant born.
I go to seek and bring him. My heart's joys
Are perfect only when by him partaken. [*Exit.*
Val. [*Solus.*] Now, by my father's soul, I cannot blame her!
The youth, the form, the brave and noble heart
Of this Alcanzor, even his foes admire.
To-day, abash'd at his superior worth,
Constrain'd and blushing homage I have paid him.
When in the battle Manfred was inclosed,
And crowded sabres o'er his helmet hung,
I heard this hero cry, Spare the old man!
And when in headlong fury I had fall'n
Before him, he disdained to take my life,
But sent me safely guarded to the rear.
His soul, as she affirms, is surely Christian;
And never shall I dare to draw my sword
To him opposed again. Yet let me pause—
Where is Tamira? All around I've gazed
With eager eyes in vain. I dread inquiry.
Sure, were she free, ere this I must have seen her.
What if confined for her intended flight,
By some inferior chief? What if reserv'd
The dazzling prize of most distinguish'd valour?
What if——ha!—sure some noise I heard this way.

Enter TAMIRA *from the secret Door. She shuts it hastily.*

Tam. He follows—no!—I'm safe. O, sacred Virgin,
Thanks—praise eternal!—What, my Valdemar,
Thou too to guard me!
Val. Yes, against the world.
But who offends my love? Where hast thou been?
What has amazed thee so?
Tam. I hardly breathe,
For terror of the villainy I've 'scaped.
Corbred——But tell me, art thou wounded?
Val. No.—
What has the villain done?
Tam. But thou'rt a captive—
I can deliver thee.
Val. Thou wilt distract me——
What did'st thou say of Corbred?
Tam. That his villainy
I had escap'd.
Val. What! did he now pursue thee?
Tam. No; from his trembling prey the savage fled,
Scared by the battle's loss. Thou shalt know all
At better leisure. Now it more behoves us
To seize this moment, and secure our safety
By speedy flight, while yet war's dreadful tempest
Its fury intermits. Ere long, I fear,
With rage increased, it will again arise.—
Come, I'll conduct thee by the way I came;
The centinel placed there dare not oppose thee.
Val. But here I am no prisoner, Tamira;
Why should I fly? The sultan's courtesy
Must not be so requited. Let us see him;
He will approve our purpose.
Tam. No, he cannot.
Noble and generous as he is, he cannot
Avow his knowledge of my flight, though pleased
When I am fled. And will Zimorna suffer
Thee to escape her at this perilous time?
Will she give war and death another chance
Against her soul's dear peace? No, she will hold thee
With sighs, with tears, with looks of soft entreaty;
Stronger confinement to the noble mind
Than links of steel, or bolts of adamant.
Meanwhile, who shall protect my father, vanquish'd
And in a villain's power?
Val. There—there thou movest me.
O, good old man! He knows not yet my fortune;
The battle was begun ere I could reach him.—
Sister, farewell! For now some other shore
We must mark out for conquest. Here again,
Clad in the garb of war, I ne'er will come;
Nor with alarms disturb the matchless pair,
So form'd in happiness and peace to reign.
Tam. O blissful sounds! No more my heart shall shudder
In dread and horror inexpressible!
No more my soul with fearful orisons,
Of jarring wishes form'd, shall weary Heaven!
No more my fancy paint a friend and father
Sinking in mutual slaughter to the earth!
But why—why wilt thou still of conquest talk?
Mean'st thou to waste thy life in foreign toils,
As if no home were thine, where, loved and honour'd,
Thou might'st retire? Since thou couldst lift a spear,
The trade of war has been thy sole delight.
What hardships hast thou borne! what perils braved!
Hast thou not been reduced, for tedious years,
Alone in want and weariness to wander?
And yet new expeditions thou wilt frame,
Insatiate and undaunted!
Val. Wouldst thou have me
Unknown sleep out the summer of my days,
Inglorious loitering on the banks of Seine;

Pleasing with mimic state and puny homage,
A spirit fir'd with hopes of regal sway?
No, my Tamira; thou shalt be a queen.
The world is wide; and well by proof I know,
That flame of glory which my bosom warms
Defies extinction from the blackest storm
Of adverse fate. I'll tell thee, my Tamira,
Even at my falling fortune's deepest ebb,
While all my outward state was most forlorn,
Within I was a king; for still within
Fancy's exhaustless world was all my own.
What bright, what glorious fabrics have I raised
By her creative power! What groves outspread,
Streams bid to flow through valleys of delight,
And meadows gilded by a gayer sun!
And when the devil Disappointment came,
With chilling frowns, to blast my paradise,
Still the sweet angel Hope quick follow'd him,
And with enlivening smiles restored its bloom.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Inside of the ruinous Temple.*

SICARDO *solus—his sword drawn.*

Sic. I did but for a moment venture forth,
To view the fatal field of our defeat,
And she was gone, vanish'd, or borne away,
I know not how. This island, as I've heard,
Has long been noted the peculiar haunt
Of spirits reprobate, who for a time
Are licens'd forth of their eternal prison,
To roam beneath the circuit of the moon.
Hither, from the four winds, their flight obscure
They bend. Some from the icy poles arrive;
Some from the crystal rocks and coral groves
Beneath the Indian main; and others spring
From the red caverns of the central fire.
Oft on the whirl of Ætna's flames they ride,
Vexing with yells and groans the gentle night;
Or in more gamesome mood, pois'd o'er the sea,
Flutter, and mix among the morning clouds,
Fantastic shapes presenting, till the sun
Arising scares them hence. In such a land
The man who darkness loves, or solitude,
Must have a heart strong arm'd in innocence;
But I———

Enter VALDEMAR *and* TAMIRA *from the bottom of the Ruin; as they appear,* SICARDO *springs towards them, but stops short, and falls on his knee.*

Ha!—who art thou?—O mercy!—Spare me!
In tears of blood I will repent my treason!

Val. Give me thy sword, and keep thy recreant life.

Stir not from hence; and if anon thou'rt question'd,
Take heed, thou saw'st us not—Come, my Tamira,
To love and liberty we fly.

Tam. Heaven guard us!

[*Exeunt* VAL. *and* TAM.

Sic. [*Solus.*] I thought to strike him, but my arm was numb'd,
And from my sword's point drops of black blood fell:
Even these old broken marbles seem'd to move
Their mutilated limbs. O murder! murder!
What can extenuate thy damning stain
On this vile heart?—What though he lives? not less
The sinking load of guilt lies heavy here,
Nor lighter will the stroke of vengeance fall.
Who shall protect me? Whither can I wander,
Outcast abhorr'd?—Men of untainted natures
Will shun me, drive me, like a plague-struck wretch,
In solitary misery to die;
And even the associates of my guilt, resenting
Their work undone, shall wreak their spleen on me,
A wavering, luckless, ineffectual villain.

Enter BENASCAR, *from the bottom.*

Ben. This way they must have past. The open door
Betray'd their flight—and lo, here stands the hero,
Unarm'd. Propitious fortune! If again
In love or war he cross me, I deserve it.
Ho, Valdemar! where is my fair deserter?
Give me the lady, or thy forfeit life——
Who's this?—Sicardo—ha!—what makest thou here?
Confused too—frighten'd—then there's knavery.
Speak!
Why art thou here?—I yet believe thee faithful.

Sic. Then thou believest I will not wrong my friend.

Ben. Whom mean'st thou?

Sic. Corbred.

Ben. Him thou canst not wrong;
In thy fidelity he puts no trust,
But when compell'd. Oft hath he sworn to me,
That thou for noble counsels art unfit,
And merely as a beast of burden useful.

Sic. Then is he false to both. He hath abused thee
Where thou canst brook it least. Not two hours since
He dragg'd Tamira hither——

Ben. He—'twas he, then——
Deceitful villain! Blasts of lowest hell
Wither his soul!—But how—where are they fled?

Sic. Most savage was his purpose, though prevented.

Ben. No more—I spy him hastily approaching;
Retire thou here, and interrupt us not.

[*Exit* SICARDO.

Enter CORBRED.

Cor. At length those cursed bands I've past, and now
Fate is my own—the fate of that proud fair.
Ha!—gone!—void!—Death and hell, what do I see?
Benascar there, and anger in his looks?—
Are we not friends?

Ben. Ay, true ones, else forsworn
To deepest reprobation. Victor now,
In spite of force and subtlety combined,
Were I not steady to my promised faith,
Thy flattering hopes would, like a sick man's dream,
Vanish, and leave thee raving. But I scorn
To waver with the fickle wind of fortune.—
Where is Tamira?

Cor. Where?—What—knowest thou not?

Ben. Else would I ask of thee? Which of your warriors
Entered our halls, like a vile skulking thief,
And seized my charming captive? What bold hero
That hardy and most dangerous enterprise
So happily achieved?

Cor. And why to me
This questioning? Amid the battle's rage,
To watch the course of each particular troop
Was not my charge.

Ben. Thou hast not seen the lady then?

Cor. How should I?

Ben. Nor knowest her fortune?

Cor. No.

Ben. Why, this is well.
A hardy-fronted villain I can love,
Who scorns a falsehood, even to screen his faults;
But from my soul I do abhor that knave
Who trusts in coward lies—and such art thou.
'Twas what I wished—that, ere I drew my sword,
With which I mean to search thy traiterous heart,
Thou shouldst be driven to damn thyself in vain,
Hoping to shun my rage.

Cor. Is this to shun thee, [*Drawing.*
Fool, driveller, idiot?—Indeed, I meant
To have retain'd thee yet a while, my handle,
My pliant tool; but since thine evil stars
Have made thee blunder on the truth untimely,
First know it all, and then to Mahomet
Carry the dismal tale. Since the first hour
That thou, mistaking much thy wisdom's gage,
Began'st to play the politician's part,
Blind-folded still I've led thee; made thee trudge
Where'er my genius pointed; loaded thee
With all the lumber of the enterprise;
And in the end design'd for thy reward
Despite and disappointment. Nature gave me
A subtle brain, to govern gulls like thee;
Or, failing that, a firm and fearless arm,
Thus at a stroke to sweep them from my way.
[*Fight.* CORBRED *falls.*

Ben. There, dog! there ends thy way; and such an end
Befits the race of rapine thou hast run.
Down, villain, down!—Thou shalt not have a moment,
Wherein to mock repentance; nor a breath,
To mutter coward prayers. The burning deep
Wide yawns to catch thee, fiends howl for thee—die!

Cor. Savage—like thee there is no fiend nor fury.
Hell will be tolerable till thou comest—
And all its flames—here, here they are already!
Heart—heart, O hadst thou felt another's pain
As now thine own, perhaps—All gracious power,
Fountain of mercy, hear!—I cannot pray—
Gloom—all is gloom, and—ha! whence came that cloud,
So pitchy black!—It falls—it crushes—oh!
[*Dies.*

Ben. So perish all my foes! Come forth, Sicardo;
Behold the fate of him who wrong'd my friendship.

Enter SICARDO.

Sic. He would have prayed; yes, he who late defied
Both Heaven and hell, this monster dared to pray.
His eyes were raised, when staring frenzy fix'd them;
And fearful supplications he intended,
When horror and despair his utterance choaked.
Benascar, mark him well—so villains die.
Find'st thou not something monitory here?
Not angels with dread trumpets rending Heaven,
And threat'ning final woe; not fate itself,
Denouncing doom, could more appal my soul,
Than this dead partner of our villainy.
I hear his ravings still, and his last groan
Yet shudders in my heart.

Ben. Think not so deeply:
True men unmoved may see a traitor die.
But tell me, on thy faith, did Valdemar
Now pass this way?

Sic. He did, and 'twas with him
Tamira went.

Ben. How she escaped,
Can never now be known. The secret rests
With that dead dog. I did at first suspect
Our Christian sultaness had freed them both;
But either she excels in nice dissembling,
Beyond my penetration, or her keenness
To have them intercepted equals mine.
While here I came, Zagan flew with a party
Of his swift Barbs down to the narrow vale,
And thither now we'll go to share his fortune.
If they escape him—then farewell to all!
But if he seize them, as I think he must,
Hold thou thy way right onward to the camp,
And stir up Manfred to another fight.
Tell him what thou hast seen; and add, besides,
Whatever moving tale thou canst devise,
Of danger to his daughter. It may chance,
Thou shalt unwitting speak most fatal truth;
For if Alcanzor thwart my tender wishes,

And dare attempt my rival to prefer,
Partial to the suggestions of Zimorna,
He might as safely go in wanton valour
To rob the famish'd lion of his prey. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Norman Camp.*

Enter MANFRED.

Man. Deceit, how cruel is thy poisonous bite!
How doubly cruel, when it comes concealed
Among the harlot kisses of feigned friendship!
This traitor Corbred—what a fool was I
So far to trust him!—What avails the name
Of leader, all that's left me, while I wave
An unavailing truncheon?—Every troop
He has seduced; his very nod commands them.
In glory he the vanguard still usurps,
While I, the implement of his designs,
Neglected follow in the lazy rear.
Here, to this post confined, I must remain
Like a poor centinel; while o'er the field
He ranges proudly, circled with his train,
And forms the plan of parting or of fight.
Why so? Forsooth my age must be respected.
Dissembling villain! where was this respect,
When in the battle he to-day forsook me,
Left me surrounded by a thousand swords,
Abandoned to an undistinguished death?
Which soon had been my fate, but for the youth
Who came, as dropt from Heaven, to rescue me,
And with an arm of more than mortal force
Swept down the Moorish ranks——

[*Shouts—and enter* VALDEMAR, *Soldiers crowding round him.*

Val. My gallant countrymen——dear fellow-soldiers,
Again I come to share in all your dangers!
Manfred, my noble father! [*Embracing.*

Man. Sacred saints!
What unhoped transport! Valdemar alive!
And thou was my preserver then, my son?
Go, fellows, fly, from tent to tent proclaim
Your general's return! Let the loud trumpets,
With shouts of triumph mingled, cleave the clouds!
Send a swift herald to the Saracen,
Insult his gates, and dare him to the field,
Where, confident of victory, we stand!

[*Exeunt Soldiers.*

O happy hour! How my old heart exults
At thy return, son of my noble friend!
But how hast thou escaped? O tell me all.

Val. Escaped! There is no prison so detested,
Where I'd not rather groan in chains and gloom,
Than thus to have escaped, compelled to leave
My heart, my soul, my life, my love behind me!
Thou talkest of victory to a vanquished man,
And vainly hopest a brave defence from him
Whose craven arm now failed to guard a prize
Richer than all the world. Hapless old man,
I must afflict thy heart.

Man. Meanest thou to leave me?
There is no other way.

Val. What if I tell thee,
That from the castle I had stolen thy daughter,
And hither quick was hasting, when a band
Of Moorish horsemen met us in the valley,
And tore her from my arms?—I fought my way
Through all their ranks—O unavailing boast!
While she was hurried to their towers again.

Man. But thou art here. Indeed it was hard fortune—
Yet thou art safe. Tamira was a captive;
She is no worse; and ample means of ransom
Are in our power.

Val. O where?

Man. In all these tents.
How many thousands there indignant stand,
Burning with shame, hiding in sullen silence
Inglorious wounds, and for another chance
To clear their blotted honour eager panting!
Go shew thyself to them, wave but thy sword,
And bid them follow thee; not one of them
But shall in speed and reckless fury mock
The tyger of the desert. Where thou lead'st,
Shouting around thee they will sweep the plain,
Spurning at opposition. To the sea
The sun declines apace; yet even to-night
In Tauromina's halls, as conquerors,
We shall repose. On this I pledge my life.

Val. To hear me urge delay in such a cause,
I know will much amaze thee; yet to-day
Alcanzor hath so loaded me with kindness,
So softened me with princely courtesy,
I cannot on the sudden steel my heart
To the full temper of this enterprise.
Perhaps the outrage of those Africans
Was done without his bidding, and, when known,
Will not by him be honoured. I'll believe so,
And straight dispatch a herald to my sister.

Man. Soft, here comes one who may the purpose change:
His troubled looks presage disastrous tidings.—
Where hast thou been, Sicardo?

Enter SICARDO.

Sic. Ere I speak
What I have seen, let my distracted soul
Entreat a pardon from this injured chief,
For wrongs of which the tottering memory
Makes life a curse.

Val. I know not well thy meaning;
But if thy guilt concern my single self,
I do forgive it, and enjoin thee silence.

Sic. Generous, but vain command! For how shall I,
So long with villains leagued, their treasons tell,
And yet forbear to prove myself a traitor?
Corbred, Benascar, murderers of my soul,
Since our first landing on this fatal shore,
What dark, what bloody doings have I seen,
Wrought by your plots accursed!—Cities betrayed,
Battalions butchered, chiefs assassinated,
And Heaven defied!—O noble Valdemar,
Little thou dream'st who struck thee, when our camp
Was by Alcanzor forced!

Val. I know—'twas Corbred.

Sic. And yet thou hast forgiven me!

Man. Corbred!—villain!
Where is he now?
Sic. Where he can no more harm us.
In quarrel, from their villainies arising,
By fierce Benascar's hand I saw him die.
Val. His crimes have found a just and awful end.
Sic. With horror torn, as from that sight I came,
Swift tow'rd the castle past a band of horsemen,
Bearing Lord Manfred's daughter. With a shout,
Benascar cried, Fortune is mine again!
To-night that sweet deserter in mine arms
Shall be imprisoned!
Val. In his arms—to-night!
Vile robber! Dares he of the sultan's captive
Think so profanely?
Sic. There's no thought of guilt
Beyond his daring.
Val. But think'st thou that band
Was by Alcanzor sent?
Sic. Most certainly;
For Zagan led them, with express command
To intercept your flight.
Val. Have I been mocked then
With a vain shew of generosity?
I thought, indeed, it was a flight of virtue
To which an infidel could never soar.
Man. And wilt thou still delay? Shall vile disgrace
One moment longer hang upon our arms?
Perhaps, even while we talk, the rude barbarian
Against Tamira meditates base outrage.
Sic. Something of this, my lord, to me he threatened,
That if by smooth and gentle means he failed,
He would—he knew not what—he would obey
Whate'er the wildness of despair could prompt.
Val. Sound the alarm, while through the camp I make
A flying progress, and exhort my veterans
To fight as they were wont! [*Exit.*
Sic. They ne'er were wont
To cope with such a foe as now defies them.
And if again we fail——
Man. Away, Sicardo!
Our pledge of certain victory we possess,
In this beloved, this noble youth, whose presence
Inspires the warrior's heart with martial fire,
As the enlivening sun all nature warms.
Shaded a while in dim eclipse he left us,
And clouds of pale dismay began to lour;
But now returning with recovered splendour,
He in the sky of glory beams supreme,
And we, in his bright influence exulting,
Resume our ardour, and our foes defy.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Portico of the Temple.*

Enter BENASCAR.

Ben. Make me his messenger!—'twas wisely done.
Why, now I seem the darling of Dame Fortune.
This embassy, though, as I well perceive,
Not meant to favour me, yet, as I've managed,
Secures the event most ardently desired;
Prepares the scene of gloom, where I unseen
May like an angry genius glide around,
And strike my destined prey. The fight is certain.
Both sides boil with revenge, for wrongs and insults
Which owe their being to this fertile brain.
Roll down, thou dazzling orb, roll swifter down,
Among the western waves to quench thy beams,
That under twilight's dim and shadowy veil
To battle we may march!—and then—my arrows—
Ay—in my quiver will I carry fate,
And wing it to the mark with steady aim.
But soft—my unsuspecting quarry comes.

Enter ALCANZOR *and* ZAGAN.

Zag. Ungrateful curs! will they not quit our heels?
This is the prosperous fruit, my friend, of mercy;
Your Christian virtue.
Alc. The peculiar badge
Of sect or party virtue cannot wear:
Free as the general air, men of all climes
Her influence partake. What thou call'st mercy,
Merely to please my heart I did; and pleasure
Of more delicious sort it never felt.
I cannot therefore wish it had not been,
Nor dread its consequence.
Ben. No, let them dread
Who thus enforce us to the extremity
Of dire revenge. There is no disposition
So mild and milky but had taken fire
At their rude insults. Scarce I could be heard
For rising clamours of their common file.
Manfred in scorn demanded why we gave
Freedom so rashly to our prisoners;
And Valdemar, disdaining other answer,
To their deep squadrons pointed with his lance;
Whereat their shields they clashed, their trumpets sounded,
And cried for instant battle; in which frenzy
I left them.
Alc. And thou seest us well prepared
To meet their madness. Much indeed it grieves me,
That Valdemar should sullenly refuse

The friendly conference I bade thee ask.
Mutual suspicions might have been dispell'd
By mutual confidence, and many a life,
Now destined to the rav'nous fangs of war,
Remain'd secure. The order of the field
I have arranged: You know your posts, my lords.
The sultaness a short farewell demands;
I'll follow soon. [*Exeunt* ZAG. *and* BEN.
This is the hour of fate,
And on the fortune of this dubious fight
Sicilia's empire hangs.

Enter ZIMORNA, *attended.*

Come, my Zimorna!
Queen of my soul, my life, my charmer, come!
Give me one soft embrace, and bid me think
On that dear strain when struggling in the battle;
Give me one heavenly smile, and bid me go
To bring thee wreaths of triumph from the field.

Zim. Yes, I once more will play the heroine,
Banish cold fear, and send thee forth to conquer;
Nay, more, attend thee in the face of danger.
Look not amazed, nor chide me from my purpose;
For now, my lord, indeed I dare not leave thee.

Alc. Why, sure thou wilt not go into the battle?

Zim. Where'er thou goest, I'll follow.

Alc. No, Zimorna!
Dear though the motive of thy bravery be,
The effect becomes thee not: To tread the paths
With blood besmear'd, where pain and fury range,
And death o'er mangled ranks infuriate rides,
Ah! wast thou made for this?

Zim. Was I not made
The laws of love and duty to obey?
I am sole cause of this impending fight.
The attempt, at my entreaty made, to bring
My cruel brother back, by him mistaken,
(For all was meant in kindness,) and perhaps
By malice aggravated, hath rekindled
The dying flame of war. On this poor quarrel
Shall brave men's lives be madly thrown away,
And kingdoms set at stake, as if in sport?
No! lead me forth between the opposing hosts,
Where, with undaunted heart and open arms,
I will advance to meet the Christian champion,
Extend this emblem of our common faith,
[*Holding forth her cross.*
Call on our noble father's honour'd shade,
And claim a brother's love. Will he reject me?
No! for I know his heart. Thou shalt behold him
Dash down his spear, rush eager to my breast,
And in a kind embrace the contest end.

Enter ASSAD.

Assad. My lord, the foe advances swift upon us.
You are expected.

Alc. Instantly I come.—
Their fury, my Zimorna, breaks thy purpose;
Therefore retire; thy guards await thee.

Zim. No!
I will not leave thee—by my love, I will not!
Here leave me dead, or let me share thy danger.
[*Holding him.*

Alc. There is no time—they are engaged already.
[*Exeunt hastily.*

Enter SICARDO.

Sic. Though life be burdensome, yet ere I die
I would deserve an honourable grave;
I would do something to dispel that gloom
Which on the portal of the eternal world
Hangs, and with horror freezes up my soul.
This is the place, and there he stiff'ning lies—
[*Looks in.*
I cannot bear the view. The fight's begun;
Fierce as conflicting storms, they rush together:
I will not join them. What is one poor life,
Among those thousands lost?—If here I fall,
And in the general carnage of the battle
My corpse be found, perhaps one hole must hold
Corbred and me. On that polluted spot
No herb shall grow, but, many an age to come,
Goblins and mid-night hags upon our bones
Practise their rites abhorred.—O blessed saints,
Inspire some deed!—Ha!—What if now I went,
With some chosen followers, to the castle,
And saved Tamira from the crafty Moor?
By Heaven I will attempt it! If successful,
I have her lover's thanks, a dearer meed
Than wreaths of glory; and even if I fail,
His pitying tears, like consecrated dew,
The dust shall hallow where my limbs are laid.
[*Exit.*

Alarm.—Enter ALCANZOR, *supporting* ZIMORNA, *with an arrow in her hand.*

Zim. Nay, do not fear, my lord: it went not deep:
The blood scarce followed when I drew it forth:
Thou seest it has no barb.

Alc. None; yet I fear,
For surely from a traiterous hand it came.
Thou stood'st behind me when it struck thy side?

Zim. I did: Some fav'ring angel placed me there,
To bear one wound for thee.

Alc. O God! O God!
This ropy juice, that smears the barbarous point,
Is not my love's pure blood. Treason is here,
And death to thee, Zimorna. To the castle—
Haste to the castle! Speedy succour yet
May stop the venom's rage. Accursed weapon,
In everlasting flames the hand shall burn
That sent thee! [*Shouts.*] Hark! the battle rages high:
Quick let me lead thee off, and find thee help,
Then back to aid my friends.

Zim. Thou shalt not go.
What, leave the field, desert thy gallant warriors,
While victory hovers o'er the adverse hosts,
And in her hand the palm of empire bears,
Yet doubtful where to give it? Fie, my lord!
I feel no pain, no fear; I do not tremble.
Return, my lord, and I'll still follow thee:
There may be more such arrows.

Alc. Matchless woman!
Think'st thou I'll leave thee till thou'rt safely lodged,
Thou dearer far than empire? No, my love.
[*Shouts.*

Ay, bustle on! Conquer or fly, I care not.
In other regions kingdoms may be won,
But in the world there's only one Zimorna.

Enter ASSAD.

Assad. My lord, confusion seizes all our troops.
The Christians, led by their recovered hero,
Rush like a torrent o'er our falling ranks:
Himself appears the minister of fate,
Or death's devouring angel. Fierce Benascar
Now sunk beneath his arm, and dying told him,
That in the castle fair Tamira's head
Was lop'd by thy command; whereat, enraged,
He thunders o'er the field, and calls Alcanzor;
While in the very waving of his sword
Our soldiers fall.

Zim. O my dear lord! now lead me—
Come to the castle.

Alc. O pernicious villain!
With his last gasp to wrong his master's fame!
Zimorna, let me clasp thee—Who can tell
When we again, if ever, thus shall meet?
One more—shame on these tears—My love, my love,
I now must leave thee—leave thee while the tremblings
Of death invade thy bosom. Loss of empire
I well can bear, but loss of honour never.
Thy brother must be met; he shall not think me
A coward, and a murderer of women. [*Shouts.*
Assad, conduct the queen—we're hard beset.—
Here, take my signet; and if that curs'd villain,
As from his words I fearfully suspect,
Hath aught devis'd against the captive lady,
Let this protect her. [*Exit.*

Zim. O Alcanzor, stay!
Return—hear but one word—avoid my brother!
He's gone—plung'd in the whirlpool of the battle—
O heav'nly powers, that love the good, protect him!
Assad, fly to the castle; and, good Assad,
Lend me thy spear—my steps begin to fail—
Stay not!—What, wilt thou disobey thy queen,
And risk the safety of her friend? Be gone!
[*Exit* Ass.
My lord! my life!—where, in the barbarous tumult,
Where shall I find thee?—How they fly confused,
A thousand ways!—And yet I see him not.—
Angels, conduct me to my warrior's side!
[*Exit slowly, leaning on the spear.*

Alarms.—Soldiers pass in disorder.—Enter ZAGAN *and an Officer.*

Off. All's lost, my lord! Think of a safe retreat.

Zag. Why, where retreat?—I care not for my life.
May not an old man bid the world good-night,
When it no longer holds a friend to love him?
I saw Alcanzor fall, the bravest youth
That ever bore a crescent on his brow,
Sinking beneath their long swords.—Curses on them!
Arassid, leave me—leave me, slave, I say!
Wouldst thou behold thine old and hardy master
Weep like a babe?—Away!

Off. Nay, my good lord,
Linger not here: We yet may reach the town,
And find some friends to guard us to our ships.
[*Exeunt.*

More Soldiers pass flying.—Enter VALDEMAR, *supporting* ZIMORNA, *she bearing* ALCANZOR'S *helmet.*

Zim. O cruel! Whither wouldst thou hurry me?
I will not leave him!—Murderer, give me way!

Val. Zimorna, this is frenzy. O'er the dead
Thy wailings and distraction have no power.
To Heaven's decrees rebellious, dar'st thou throw
That life away which to thy friends thou owest?

Zim. Yonder he lies!—I kissed his bloody brow,
And closed his eye-lids. No distorting look,
No ghastly frightful frown deformed my hero;
Soft as a lover's sigh was his last breath.
Butcher! Barbarian! No more my brother!
This was thy ruthless deed.—Away—unhand me!
Stained with Alcanzor's blood, dar'st thou pollute
With impious touch his miserable widow!
[*She struggles from him, and sits down on the steps of the portico.*
Widow—yes, am I not that wretch forlorn?

Val. But not by me so made. Alcanzor fell,
By numbers overwhelmed; and, ere I came,
His life was fled.

Zim. He never wrong'd Tamira.
Villainy has been busy with us all,
And she, I fear, has fallen his earliest prey;
If not, to the protection of Alcanzor
Thou owest her safety. Yet was this the man
Whom thou in fury sought'st around the field,
Whose fall thou couldst with savage joy behold,
And on whose grave—on whose untimely grave,
Thou hast no tear to shed!

Val. I was deceived,
And by my love distracted. Yet thou wrong'st me,
To think I glory in thy husband's death,
Or that, with heart obdurate, I can give
His memory unlamented to oblivion.
With all the pomp of war he shall be laid
In earth; and on his tomb I will proclaim him
Hero, by all admired, beloved, bewailed.
Wilt thou believe me, and be comforted?

Zim. Comfort is dead; but yet I will believe,
And bless my brother. O my Valdemar!
The sharpest pang of death thou hast removed—
We part in charity.

Val. Speak not of parting.
Let me support thee till we find relief.

Zim. I have no consolation but to feel
That all relief is vain. Here let me rest:
Since thou hast dragged me from my hero's bosom,
On this poor relic I must lean my head.
[*Setting down the helmet.*
I know it well—here is the very plume

Which I this morning gaily planted on it.
Heaven—awful Heaven! how little did I dream
That, ere the close of day, it should be made,
Torn from its lifeless lord, my dying pillow!
[*Sinking on the steps.*
My brother—my dear brother—one request
I have to make.
Val. [*Kneeling by her.*] 'Tis granted. Oh, Zimorna,
Thou tear'st my heart!
Zim. In my Alcanzor's grave
Let me be buried, close, close by his side—
Wilt thou?—and lay mine arm beneath his head.
We'll sleep the long dark night that now falls round us
Profoundly, till the final dawn arise.
Already there I see him—on his cloud
Reclined, he waits.—I come—my lord, my love,
Zimorna comes—and—Heaven is merciful.
[*Dies.*

Val. Gone, gone for ever! O unhappy sister,
Too dearly hast thou bought thy transient glory!
And deeply hast thou paid offended Heaven
The forfeit due for sacred duties left.
Now what remains to me? An empty world,
Where without resting-place I still must wander.
The field is won; the foe confounded fly;
And now without competitor I stand
Lord of Sicilia. Could I have believed
That triumph, conquest, empire, ere should seem
No better than ungrateful drudgery,
As now too sure they do?—Alas, Tamira!
The enchanting hope of sharing them with thee
Was their attractive spell, and wanting that,
They have no charm.—Ye sacred powers of Heaven,
What do I see?—O mock not my sad heart
With visions of unutterable rapture!

Enter MANFRED, TAMIRA, SICARDO; ASSAD *and* ZAGAN, *Prisoners*—TAMIRA *runs to* VALDEMAR.

Tam. He lives! my conqueror, my hero lives,
And danger is no more!
Val. 'Tis real—'tis she—
'Tis my Tamira! [*Embracing.*
Man. O my son—my daughter—
Props of my life, who make the vale of years
Look lovely to me—take a father's blessing:
May this embrace begin perpetual peace,
And this day be the last that e'er shall bring
Grief to your hearts!
Val. But how escaped my love?
Or was the dreadful fate that threatened her
But fabled malice?
Tam. No—there stands the man
[*Pointing to* SIC.
To whom thou owest my safety. To a slave
Benascar left me, with this gloomy charge,
That if his troop were seen to fly the field,
My death should follow. I had said my prayers,
And bar'd my neck, and clos'd my trembling eyes,
When, with a shout, Sicardo rushing came,
And catched the lifted sabre.
Val. From this moment
He is my brother; and to all our friends,
Each in their rank, shall due rewards be dealt.
These warriors too, so faithful to Alcanzor,
Shall see me strive to imitate his virtues.
But the sad object of our earliest care
Behold! [*Turning to* ZIMORNA.
Tam. My friend—my lovely friend—my sister!
Heart-piercing sight!—Alas! my Valdemar;
Alas! my father—see the fruit of war.
Go now, and talk of glory!—Go, and raise
The insulting voice of triumph.—Oh, Zimorna!
[*Sinking by her.*
Man. This is the life of man, my children; thus
His days of mingled hue are doomed to pass,
Like all things round him. Who has seen the sun
Without a cloud reach his meridian height?
When did the woods their summer mantle wear,
Of lovely green, without one blighted spot?
Or where's the fountain of such limpid flow,
As never suffered stain?—We have our joys,
Frequent and sweet: We have our sorrows too;
But how proportioned, in what order mix'd,
At the conclusion is of little moment.
Our deeds are all that we can leave behind us,
And only active virtue merits fame. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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